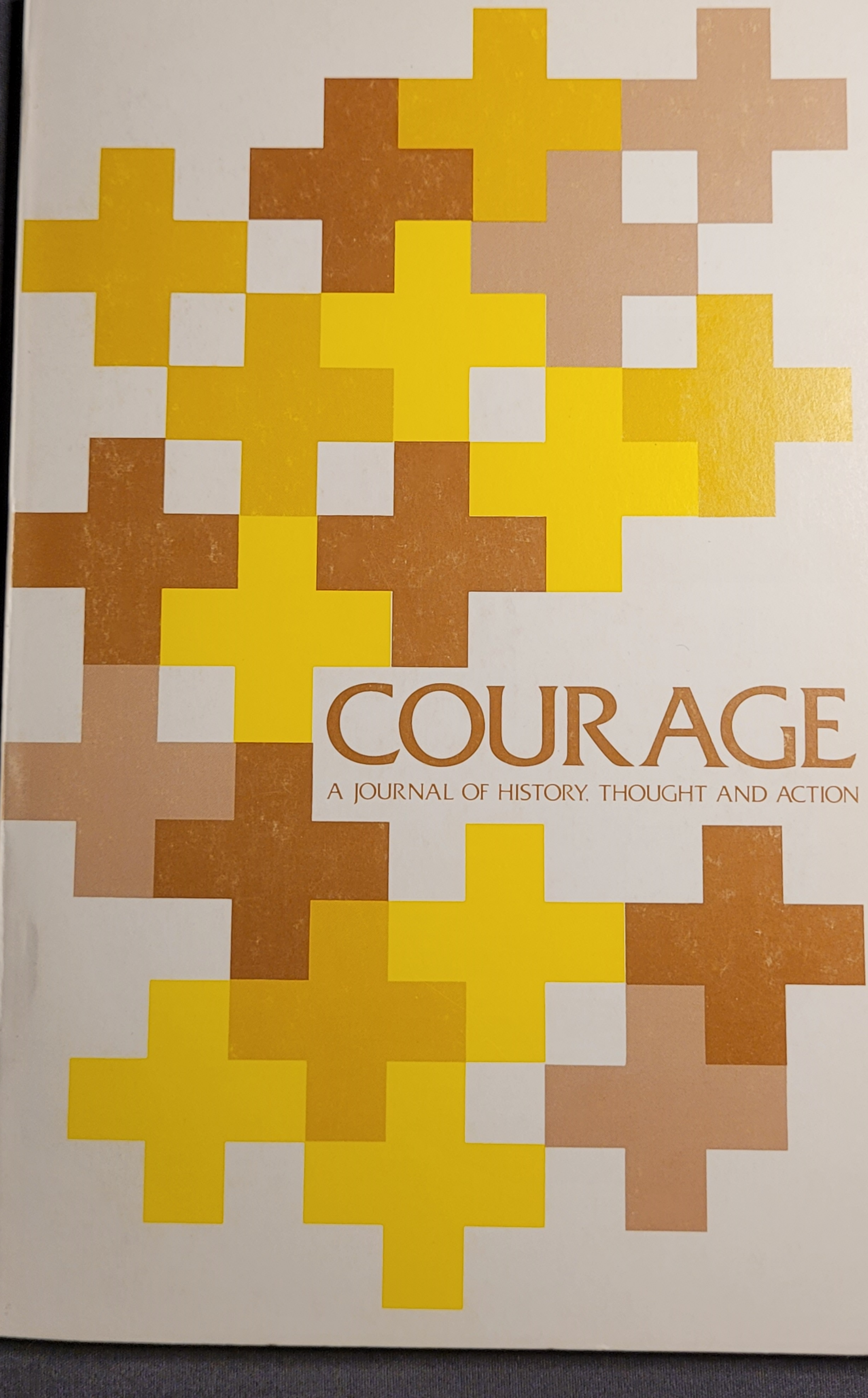

# COURAGE

A JOURNAL OF HISTORY, THOUGHT AND ACTION

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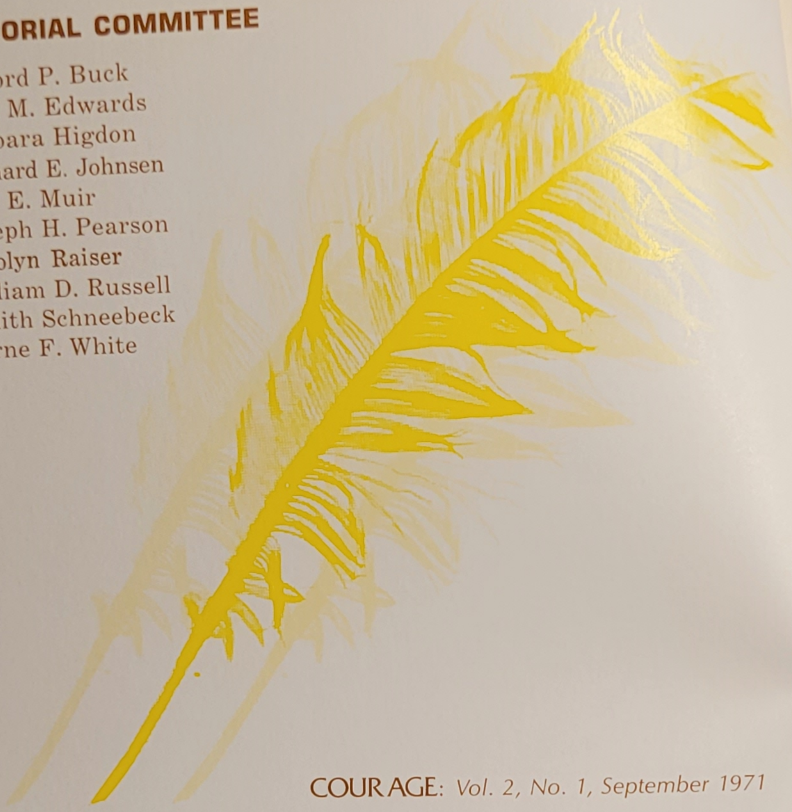

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**EDITOR:** William D. Russell

**COPY EDITOR:** Carolyn Raiser **ART DIRECTOR:** Barney Newcom

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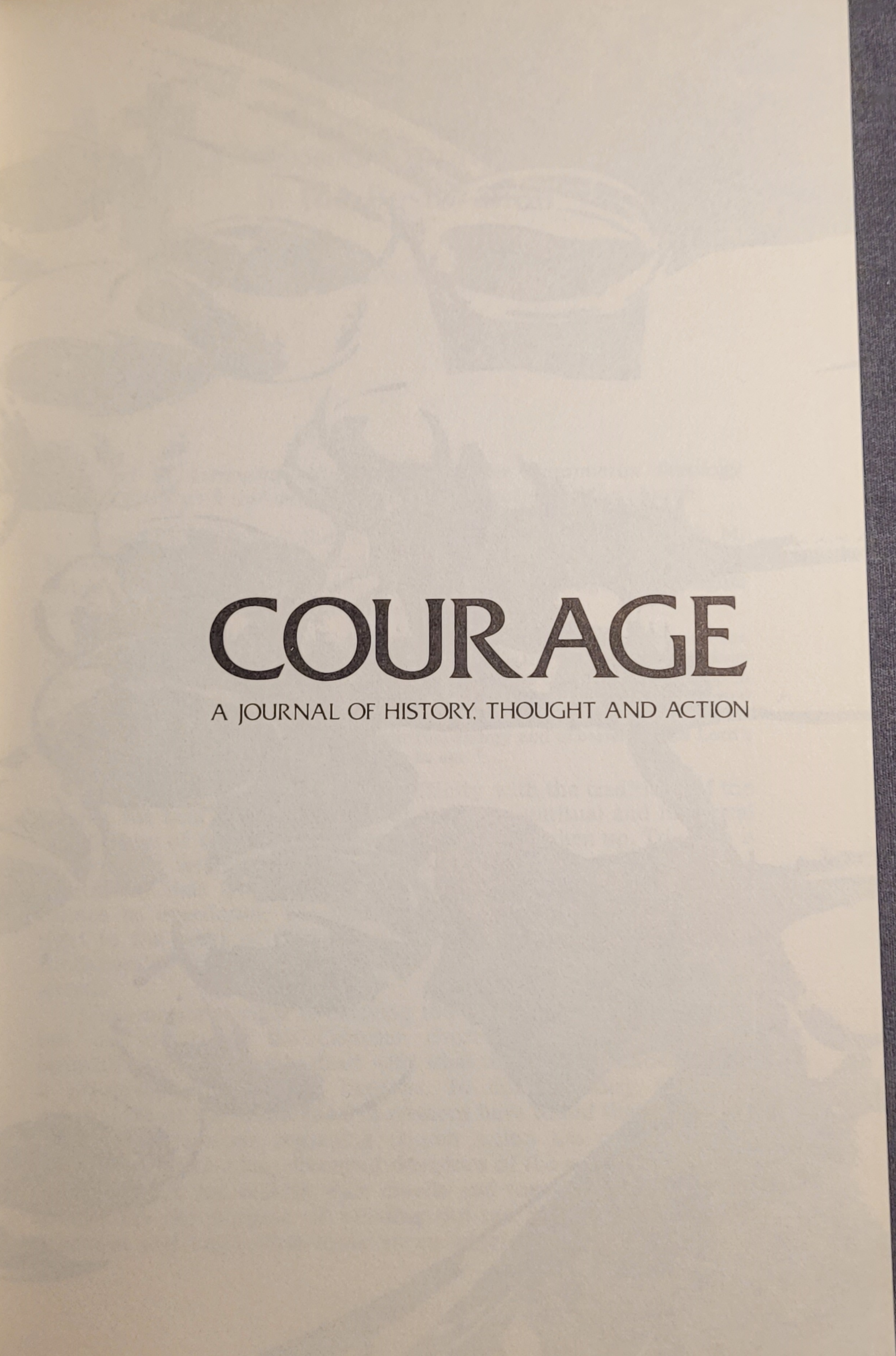

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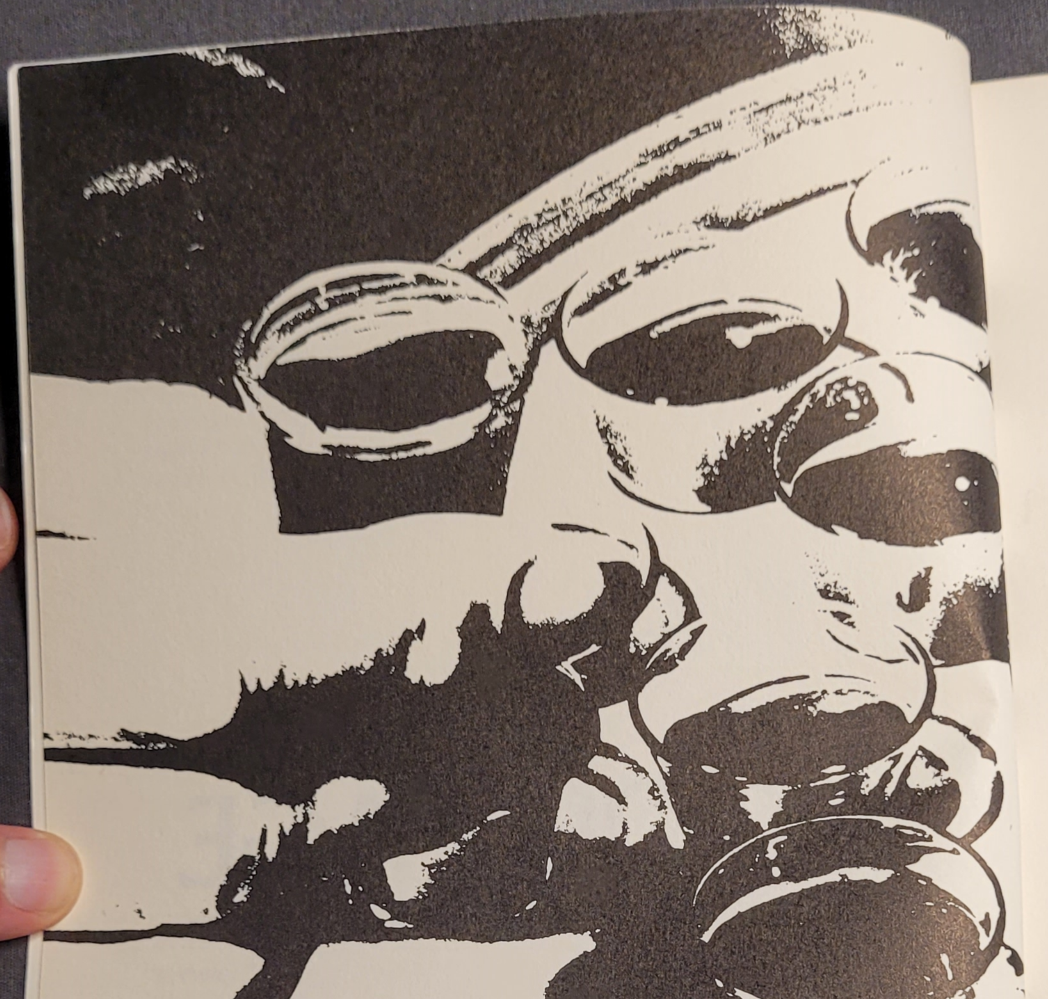

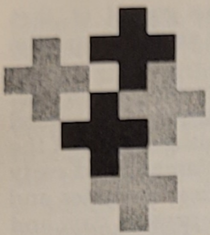

# Closed Communion in the Restoration

W. Grant McMurray

*We need to determine whether or not our sacramental theology squares itself with our understanding of the nature of the church.*

The late leader of the Restoration movement, Frederick M. Smith, prefaced his lengthy and scholarly consideration of the Lord's Supper in the *Saints' Herald* in 1913 with these insightful thoughts about the process of rethinking and reinterpretation.

> In another article we have pointed out the trend of modern thought and the relation of the church to scholarship, emphasizing the duty of the religious teacher to restate the dogmas of the church or the truths of the universal religion in terms of modern thought, that those truths might be properly co-ordinated with the facts of present-day knowledge. And as one of the great rites of the church in which is stored a wealth of spiritual energy and experience, the Lord's Supper needs such a restatement from age to age.[1]

In this spirit of inquiry and in affinity with the traditions of the church the task of looking anew at the deep spiritual and historical significance of the Lord's Supper must again be taken up. To do so is a profound task indeed. The Lord's Supper is an act of dramatic symbolism that owns a place in Christian church history which cannot be overstated. The issues that surround the eucharist thrust right to the heart of Christianity itself, raising time and again the fundamental issues with which the Christian must continually wrestle.

The emotional vigor underlying the debate of this issue throughout the history of the Christian church delineates clearly how seriously churchmen have dealt with what they have considered to be a priceless part of their heritage. In contemporary times the proponents of the ecumenical movement have found that the central focus of discussions regarding church union has often been the problem of reconciling divergent doctrines of the eucharist. Histories of the church are replete with creeds and formulas that have been devised for the purpose of weeding out our "heretical" eucharistic doctrines and employing those views which were considered to be consistent with the church's understanding of the gospel at that point in time. As a result, commonality was seldom achieved and the controversy became more bitter and violent.

The task of considering the issue of closed communion[2] within the RLDS fellowship is not one which can be adequately handled within the limits of an article such as this. Any consideration of the RLDS tradition must also deal with the New Testament and early Christian origins of the Lord's Supper, the theological struggles and developments that have marked Christianity to the present day, and among many other things, the contemporary struggle of the ecumenical movement as it has bumped up against this most important doctrine in its quest for church unity.

It might be appropriate and within the scope of this project, however, to mention several ways in which current scholarship has explained closed communion as developing out of biblical and early Christian origins. These are not complete or comprehensive in any way but give an indication of the kind of historical and critical backdrop which informs this area of study.[3]

1. It is quite possible that closed communion can be traced back beyond the institution of the eucharist into Jewish pre-history. The nature of Jewish religious feasts suggests that the initial practice may well have been a part of the tradition within which it was established rather than a conscious format adopted for universal use by all Christians.
2. The autonomous development of the rite among the local churches of scattered Christendom made it virtually impossible for the unity of form and practice to exist. Wide experimentation among local churches makes any attempt to reconstruct the "original" form in contemporary times an impossible task.
3. An early shift in the concept of the eucharist to include many quasimagical properties was cause for the development of an exclusive and holy rite which prohibited all but those sharing that view to participate.
4. The pre-Nicene period of Christian persecutions forced the church to prohibit, for security reasons, all those who were not of the faith from sharing in worship.
5. The practice of barring communion from nonmembers in the first century meant that *non-Christians* were refused. This is considerably different from the practice of closing the sacrament to Christians of a different denomination.

With this sort of perspective and against the massive background of eucharistic scholarship the issue of closed communion must be considered. The task adopted here is one of surveying briefly the historical, scriptural, and traditional resources for the RLDS church's position on closed communion. Admittedly, this review but opens the door to the kind of research needed for a thorough understanding, but hopefully it will serve to delineate the major issues as they have developed.

A review of the RLDS literature on the matter of the Lord's

Supper reveals one amazing fact; there is an unusual absence of comprehensive and significant material on this subject to be found among the writings of the Restoration movement. There is a clear position, to be sure; but tracing the development of that doctrine back through the early periods is a difficult task indeed. It seems strange that a question receiving such extensive treatment throughout the history of the Christian church would merit only superficial treatment in the restored tradition, and all of that based upon some highly questionable doctrinal presuppositions.

It is, of course, quite clear that closed communion has been practiced throughout the Restoration movement. Several reasons could be attributed to the development of the practice. First, the early church saw itself as called to establish "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 1:5e), complete with authoritative priesthood and the original form of the church established by Jesus in the first century. Hence, the sacraments would be understood as instituted for the church and available only to those baptized into it. Section 17 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, a compilation of early material involving the procedures of organizing the church and the duties of the priesthood, gives evidence that the Lord's Supper was to be associated with the teaching ministry of the church and related to sharing in the fellowship of the body:

> The duty of the members after they are received by baptism: The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, previous to their partaking of the sacrament, and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders; so that all things may be done in order.—*Doctrine and Covenants* 17:18a-b.

It seems clear, in looking at the order of instruction in Section 17, that the *intent* of the statement is to indicate that participating in the communion is a role reserved for baptized members.

As early as March 1831 a document was presented to the church with instructions on the conduct of meetings, recognizing the diversity of religious backgrounds shared by the early converts. Concerning the communion the document sets forth several policies:

> Ye are also commanded not to cast anyone, who belongeth to the church, out of your sacrament meetings; nevertheless, if any have trespassed, let him not partake until he makes reconciliation. And again I say unto you, Ye shall not cast anyone out of your sacrament meetings, who is earnestly seeking the kingdom; I speak this concerning those who are not of the church.—*Doctrine and Covenants* 46:1d-2.

The wording is somewhat awkward but the context suggests that it is the practice of the church to refuse communion to those who are not members of the fellowship, and it has been so interpreted throughout the movement. The thrust of the statement appears to be the instruction that all are welcome to attend the meetings. An earlier statement in verse one had indicated that the church's public meetings "are held before the world."

A second reason that probably led to the practice of closed communion was an interpretation of several key passages in the *Book of Mormon* in light of the doctrine of the church indicated above. The accounts of Christ administering the sacrament as found in III Nephi relate worthiness for partaking with baptism:

> And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said to the disciples, "Behold, there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread, and bless it, and give it to the people of my church, to all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name."—III Nephi 8:32.

A later point in the eighth chapter indicates that unworthy participation is eating and drinking damnation to the soul. If one is found to be unworthy, he is not to be cast out but given ministry. If he responds to the ministry offered to him, he can then participate in the sacrament: "And if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister to him of my flesh and blood" (III Nephi 8:62). Again, worthiness is equated with repentance and baptism.

It is interesting to note two instances where apparent inconsistencies in the order of receiving the various sacraments can be found. The III Nephi account I referred to indicates that Jesus distributed the emblems to the multitude *before* they were baptized, although the content of the material is such that it becomes clear that the intent in the future is to serve only those who repent and are baptized. More interesting, however, is an account attributed to Joseph Smith and cited in Volume One of RLDS Church History:

> Early in the month of August, Newel Knight and his wife paid us a visit, at my place, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, and as neither his wife nor himself had been as yet confirmed, it was proposed that we should confirm them, and partake together of the sacrament, before he and his wife should leave us. . . . We prepared some wine of our own make, and held our meeting, consisting only of five; viz., Newel Knight and his wife, myself and my wife, and John Whitmer. We partook together of the sacrament, after which we confirmed these two sisters (persons) into the church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner.[4]

It is a technical matter, since the Knights evidently were already baptized but had not yet been confirmed into full fellowship. However, this passage suggests that the sacrament was administered before the confirmation, an apparent deviation from traditional practice.

Some substantial changes were made in the Matthew account of the Lord's Supper during the development of the Inspired Version of the Bible. Richard Howard, in *Restoration Scriptures*, indicates that initial changes were made by Joseph Smith in the spring of 1831 (corresponding closely with the date of *Doctrine and Covenants* 46) and that considerable further revision was undertaken by John Whitmer about September of the same year.[5]

The content of the changes in the new translation had several major thrusts. Referring to the offering of the cup, Matthew 26:28 in the King James Version reads: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The corresponding verse in the Inspired Version, numbered Matthew

26:24, is as follows: "For this is in remembrance of my blood of the new testament, which is shed for as many as shall believe on my name, for the remission of their sins."

The significance of the change is twofold. First, the addition of the phrase "for as many as shall believe on my name" was consistent with the practice of the church at that point and indicated a somewhat more exclusive criteria for receiving the sacrament than had been indicated in the earlier translations. Modern versions, based on later manuscript discoveries, did not, of course, add the phrase.

The second important change was the addition of the words "in remembrance of" before the phrase "my blood of the new testament." The same addition was made earlier in Matthew, referring to "my body," as well as in the record of Mark. The King James and Inspired Versions are almost identical in Luke 22:17-20. They both contain the statement, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The emphasis in the Inspired Version on the body and blood as a memorial was indicative, in part, of an attempt by the church to refute the doctrine of transubstantiation as practiced by the Catholic church. The literature of the church makes it clear that the efficacy of the sacrament cannot be found in the elements themselves.

Despite the emphasis on remembrance in interpreting the meaning of the Lord's Supper the tradition of the church has been to refer to the eucharist as something more than just a memorial. Instead, it has been understood to be an authoritative sacrament of the church, as we have seen, dependent upon administration by an ordained priesthood. A. B. Phillips, in a July 1935 article in *The Priesthood Journal*, was emphatic in stressing this aspect of the supper:

> The communion is for the body of Christ—the church only, and to be administered only by a priesthood chosen of God. Any other procedure is a perversion of his law, sacrilege against the blood of Christ, and a breeder of spiritual disease and apostasy.[6]

The early part of the Reorganization quickly affirmed close communion within the newly formed church and on April 9, 1868, the annual conference of the church made a definitive statement:

> RESOLVED: That unbaptized persons, whether children or adults, are not entitled to partake of the sacrament of bread and wine.[7]

There does not seem to be any information in church history indicating the reasons for that resolution. The minutes of the annual conference show only that the statement was approved.

Statements made by Joseph Smith III fleshed out substantially the doctrine of close communion. Part of his rationale was an interpretation of the Pauline phrase, "discerning the body," translated in the Inspired Version as in the King James, "discerning the Lord's body":

> . . . we are commanded not to let communicants partake unworthily; this unworthiness in part is the failure to discern in the church, the Lord's body; or, in other words, the church acknowledged of Christ as his.[8]

Herbert M. Scott, the author of the little tract published by Herald House on "Close Communion," followed almost identically the words of Joseph Smith III as cited above and then drew a somewhat problematic conclusion:

> The original meaning of the term "discern" is "to recognize or distinguish" the body. Therefore, a person not baptized under the authority of his church does not see or understand, does not obligate himself to participation, hence does not "discern" the body of Christ.[9]

This statement assumes an extremely narrow and exclusive definition of the "body of Christ" that many more recent assertions by the church would seem to refute. Further, it fails to support at all the alleged relationship between "discerning the body" and baptism.

The Scott pamphlet then paraphrased very closely a further statement by Joseph Smith III in the same *Saints' Herald* article cited earlier, in which Smith asserted:

> Whoever should partake with us in the covenant, by eating and drinking of the bread and wine, would by such an act of partaking also be virtually assenting that the church by whose officers the emblems were offered and administered was the church of Christ, and the officers administering were acting in their proper places and authorized to officiate in the name of the church and Christ. This acknowledgment we have not the right to demand or permit them to make without the previous baptism which the word of God requires; hence the wisdom of the church in not permitting those not of the faith in which we have been baptized to partake of the sacrament with us. . . .[10]

Whether or not a person partaking of the sacrament is assenting to all the things suggested is a bit difficult to know. At any rate, the latter part of the statement seems to avoid the fact that refusing to serve the sacrament to nonmembers is primarily based on an exclusivist doctrine of the church. It is highly unlikely that the preservation of a communicant's integrity is at issue here. I doubt, at least, that the nonmember who has been denied communion in an RLDS service would look at it in that way.

One final strand of eucharistic theology that I have alluded to but not dealt with at any length is the concept of the Lord's Supper as a renewal of the covenant made at baptism. Frederick M. Smith, in an introductory article to a *Priesthood Journal* edition devoted to the Lord's Supper, wrote in July 1935:

> A sacrament may be defined as a covenant, or promise, or oath, made with a strong religious accompaniment. . . . The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is so called because in the ceremony we bind ourselves again to the conditions of the promise made in the waters of baptism.[11]

The aspect of covenant renewal is, of course, the defense given to the practice of making baptism a prerequisite to partaking of the communion. Because baptism is usually understood as a washing away of sins, it is then possible to connect to the eucharist, interpreted as covenant renewal, the forgiveness of sins. Recall again Matthew 26:28, ". . . this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (RSV). That there are problems to an interpretation of this passage which suggests that the forgiveness of sins is related to the eucharistic rite as well as the initial sacrifice Frederick M. Smith acknowledged in his classic *Herald* series in 1913:

> . . .it must be admitted that it is open to some argument as to whether the remission of sins he then referred to applied only to the efficacy of his blood as a propitiatory offering in baptism alone, or in both the initial and secondary covenant. We incline to the opinion that he here meant to convey the idea of propitiation as a part of the renewal of the covenant as well as the initial rite.[12]

One further function and characteristic of the Lord's Supper noted by Frederick M. Smith is worthy of mention. Smith saw the eucharist as a rite of communion and fellowship. "Those united by the bonds of a common belief in and acceptance of Jesus the Christ, partake as his guests, and that bond of fraternity is strengthened thereby."[13] Conscious fellowship by those of like faith strengthens the church and maintains solidarity between the Saints.

More than just a fellowship between men, however, it is also a rite wherein the participants receive of the spiritual nature of Christ through communion with him. Smith noted the Presence of Christ as one of the "mysteries of godliness" but pointed to the RLDS understanding of the Presence: "Christ is present through representatives (those holding the priesthood) and by his Spirit, and in the souls of 'all those who partake' worthily."[14]

All of these images, and others, are found peppered throughout the literature of the church. Most of them are undeveloped theologically and, at times, inconsistent with other assertions. It is possible to see, however, that the RLDS conception of the eucharist, as expressed in the tradition and literature of the church, is not without problems. Serious questions can be raised about the relationship between baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as the matter of covenant renewal and the efficacy of the sacrament for the forgiveness of sins. The dearth of comprehensive material to be found on the development of the doctrine contributes to the difficulty of dealing with and maintaining historical integrity.

More pressing, perhaps, than reconciling the issues of the past is coming to terms with the demands of the present. The important thing here is to raise again the historic struggle of defining the nature of the church. The imperative that then presents itself is determining whether or not our sacramental theology squares itself with our understanding of the church.

Many questions arise at this point. What are the sociological and psychological realities into which the church is called to minister? How does the issue of "world church-ness" address itself to the tradition of the Lord's Supper? What is the place of the RLDS church among the other members of Christendom?

These are not proposals but questions that emerge in light of the continuing need to understand the gospel as it speaks to the contemporary situation.

The church needs to take up the task of struggling with the meaning of its table fellowship. If it fails to do so, the eucharist may soon divest itself of its great historical and traditional significance as a corporate act of faith in the ongoing relevance of the gospel in every age.

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1. Frederick M. Smith, "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," *Saints' Herald*, Vol. 60 (October 15, 1913), 1001.

2. The RLDS Church has traditionally used the term "close communion" as opposed to "closed communion." The reason is not altogether clear and is not dealt with at any length in the literature of the church. It is usually understood, however, to indicate that the communion is offered only to those who are "close" in the fellowship, thereby using a positive term rather than the negative one.

3. Some resources for future reference to the biblical and historical issues surrounding the communion would include:

(1) Barclay, William. *The Lord's Supper.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1967.
(2) Dix, Dom Gregory. *The Shape of the Liturgy.* Glasgow: University Press, 1945.
(3) Schweizer, Eduard. *The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament.* (Biblical Series No. 18) Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967.
(4) *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Vol. III). New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

4. Joseph Smith, Jr., as quoted in *History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, Missouri, 1896), 115-17.

5. Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures* (Independence, Missouri, 1969), 88-90.

6. A.B. Phillips, "Why We Observe Close Communion," *The Priesthood Journal*, Vol. 2 (July 1935), 22.

7. *Rules and Resolutions* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1952), 36. Resolution No. 91 was adopted April 9, 1868.

8. Joseph Smith III, "Are We Close Communion," *Saints' Herald*, Vol. 53 (October 24, 1906), 1004.

9. Herbert M. Scott, "Close Communion" (Independence, Missouri), 7.

10. Joseph Smith III, *op. cit.*, 1004.

11. Frederick M. Smith, "The Lord's Supper," *The Priesthood Journal*, Vol. 2 (July 1935), 7.

12. Frederick M. Smith, "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," *Saints' Herald*, Vol. 60 (October 29, 1913), 1051.

13. *Ibid.*, 1050.

14. *Ibid.*, 1051.

*W. Grant McMurray is employed in the Division of Program Planning at the RLDS headquarters in Independence, Missouri.*

# The Uses of History: Sidney Rigdon and the Religious Historians

F. Mark McKiernan

*Religious historians have robbed Sidney Rigdon of his rightful place in history because his search for truth was not compatible with any organized religion of his time.*

True objectivity in historical writing is an exceedingly rare quality under the best of conditions. However, in regard to the nineteenth century religious reformer Sidney Rigdon, various schools of writers with religious causes to prove and support have distorted his historical image to suit those causes. To a devout defender of the faith, Sidney Rigdon was the worst thing one could confront, an apostate. Rigdon, however, was not just an ordinary apostate; he was a charismatic leader, a biblical scholar, and a public speaker seemingly without equal.

Rigdon was a popular pastor among the Baptists in his native Pennsylvania in the early 1820's. He was a most successful revivalist for Alexander Campbell in the latter 1820's in the Western Reserve. He was one of the two most important leaders of Mormonism during that movement's first decade. His energies, ideas, and converts became a vital part of these religious movements. But religious historians, in their works, have eviscerated his contributions and vilified his name.

Daryl Chase, whose biography, *Sidney Rigdon—Early Mormon*, is unique because he attempted to write an honest appraisal of the man, summed up the problem:

> One is handicapped in a study of his activities by the fact that he is still considered an apostate by three different churches; and because of this the various church historians have been tempted to minimize his work while he was a member of their particular group and at the same time sharply criticize some of his actions.[1]

Three groups have blatantly rewritten Rigdon's history to suit their own ideas. They are the Disciples of Christ, the anti-Mormons who credit Rigdon with the production of the *Book of Mormon*, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although the bibliography of Rigdon's accusers is immense in each category, for the purpose of this paper the most generally respected historian will be selected from each religious persuasion.

Most of the modern historians of the Disciples of Christ movement mention only Rigdon's leaving their movement and becoming involved with Mormonism. His long years of sacrifice and success in gathering converts to the gospel message as taught by Alexander Campbell were totally ignored in David E. Harrell, Jr.'s *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866*. Omitted is the fact that Rigdon abandoned one of the most popular and prosperous Baptist churches in Pittsburgh to follow Campbell's teachings and as a result endured dire poverty for two years. In fact, Harrell referred to Rigdon only three times and always in a derogatory way:

> By 1831 the most fanatical fringe of the movement in the Western Reserve had been drained off by the defection of the erratic Sidney Rigdon, along with several other preachers and a number of churches to the Mormons.[2]

Harrell's source was the Campbellite historian Amos Hayden's *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve*. Hayden mentioned in the pages cited by Harrell neither a fanatical fringe nor the Mormons.

Though stigmatizing Rigdon as an apostate, Hayden, unlike Harrell, was scholar enough to document Rigdon's influence as a successful revivalist for the Campbellites in the Western Reserve. He noted six towns in the area in which Rigdon held revivals which were so successful that Hayden described his efforts in March 1828 as the "great religious awakening in Mentor."[3]

Concerning Rigdon's conversion to Mormonism, Harrell stated:

> The lasting effects of the Mormon defections on the Disciple churches were not serious and the rapid growth of the movement in Ohio was hardly interrupted. More important, from the point of view of Disciples, was the fact that the radical element in the church, the element which had been prone to accept radical economic schemes, was largely drained off in the process.[4]

Harrell may have felt that way but Alexander Campbell and his father Thomas did not share his views. The first Mormon exposé was written by Alexander Campbell in February 1831 as a direct result of Rigdon's having embraced Mormonism in October of the previous year.[5] According to the Mormon missionary Parley P. Pratt, who converted Rigdon, Mormonism had a thousand converts in the Western Reserve within a few months in those towns where Rigdon had held his revivals.[6] Thomas Campbell spent most of that year in Mentor, Ohio, and the vicinity following Rigdon and fighting Mormonism. For years the Campbellites were among the most violent of the Mormon haters.

The anti-Mormons of various religious stripes have accused Rigdon of being the prime conspirator in the production of the *Book of Mormon*. There are vast numbers of published works and manuscripts which claim that Rigdon stole a manuscript from an unsuccessful novelist, one Solomon Spaulding, and with the aid of Joseph Smith wrote the *Book of Mormon.*[7] This idea has been in print since 1834, but the best current statement of the conspiracy theory is Joseph White's "The Influence of Sidney Rigdon upon the Theology of Mormonism."[8] This conspiracy theory, that the Spaulding manuscript was the basis of the *Book of Mormon*, should have been interred when the manuscript was found and given to Oberlin College in 1885.[9]

Some anti-Mormon writers have dismissed Fairchild's argument by saying there was another manuscript, but White has failed to discover any trace of it. Yet the myth of Rigdon as the founder of Mormonism has been most difficult to destroy. (If Sidney Rigdon *had* written the *Book of Mormon*, its prose style would have been greatly improved.)

Many Mormon historians have made a conscious effort to cut Sidney Rigdon out of any place of significance in their history, which, considering the circumstances, is a most difficult feat; but they have generally succeeded. Most Mormon writers have quoted and believed their revered historian Brigham Henry Roberts. Any scanning of footnotes of dissertations and books produced by Mormon scholars will reveal their reliance on Roberts' two great collections of Mormon history, the six-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1930) and the so-called *Documentary History of the Church* (1932).[10] The *Comprehensive History* was reprinted in 1965 and the *Documentary History* in 1969.

Roberts in his *Comprehensive History* deliberately ignored Rigdon's great eloquence at his trial at Liberty jail. At the end of November 1838, most of the church leaders were incarcerated at the county jail at Liberty, Missouri. In February 1839, Smith and Rigdon's pleas for writs of habeas corpus were granted. Alexander Doniphan, their non-Mormon attorney, pleaded the cases of all the Mormon prisoners except Rigdon, who acted in his own defense.

At Rigdon's trial for murder and treason, the courtroom was crowded with about a hundred excited anti-Mormons who were veterans of the Mormon War. Rigdon was ill and emaciated from his months of incarceration. He pleaded innocent to the crimes against him but enumerated the privations, persecutions, and sufferings he had received in his relentless pursuit for religious truth. Doniphan recorded, "Such a burst of eloquence it was never my fortune to listen to, at its close there was not a dry eye in the room, all were moved to tears." The judge dismissed the case against Rigdon immediately. One of the audience stood up and declared, "We came here determined to do injury to this man. He is innocent of crime, as has been made to appear. And now, gentlemen, out with your money and help the man return to his destitute family." The anti-Mormon audience raised $100 to help Rigdon.[11]

Roberts dismissed this remarkable incident by saying, "A Hearing was obtained on writs of *habeas corpus* before Judge Turnham, one of the judges of Clay county, and Sidney Rigdon was released; but the rest were remanded to prison."[12]

Roberts' treatment of Rigdon comes into full focus with the so-called *Documentary History of the Church.* It claims to be the writings of Joseph Smith which were published in the *Times and Seasons,* the official church paper in Nauvoo, Illinois, and the *Millennial Star* in England.The title page read, *History of Joseph Smith the Prophet by Himself,* with an introduction and notes by Roberts. These historical volumes were written and published to give the reader the same psychological impression of holy writ as the red-letter edition of the King James version of the Bible; the words of the Mormon prophet are in big black bold type and those of Roberts in fine single spaced light type. Thus, it would seem that the reader has ready access to the actual words of the prophet. However, this is not the case because Roberts tampered with the manuscript, changing the grammar, punctuation, and spelling, rearranging the paragraphs, and bowdlerizing page after page. He should be considered not a father of Mormon historical writing but a Mormon Jared Sparks. The historical inaccuracies of the *Documentary History* were documented as early as 1909 by H. H. Smith in the *Journal of History,*[13] but Smith's work had little influence on Mormon historical writing.

Roberts in the *Documentary History* deliberately assassinated Rigdon's character through massive bowdlerizations and changes in meaning. In a brief passage, well hidden in his lengthy introduction, Roberts does concede that he edited Smith's manuscript, but claims that this did not change the meaning. On the contrary, he eviscerated Smith's history so as to rob Rigdon of the Mormon prophet's favorable statements concerning his character, his influence, and his abilities.

Let us consider a specific example: Roberts spliced the narrative of Smith together on page 120 in volume one of the *Documentary History* so that nine pages of the *Times and Seasons* account are omitted; this omission constituted fifteen typed pages of Smith's best prose, giving a vivid description of his estimation of Rigdon's character, ability, and personality. The first paragraph which Roberts omitted gives Smith's explanation of his reason for writing a sketch of Rigdon's life.

> As there has been a great rumor, and many false statements have been given to the world respecting Elder Rigdon's connections with the Church of Jesus Christ [Mormon], it is necessary that a correct account of the same be given, so that the public mind may be disabused on the subject. I therefore proceed to give a brief history of his life down, from authentic sources, also an account of his connection with the church of Christ.[14]

Smith told of Rigdon's success as pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pittsburgh and of Rigdon's having left it to follow Alexander Campbell's doctrine:

> . . . [C]onsequently, if he was to disavow the doctrine of the Church with whom he was associated, he knew no other way to obtain a livelihood except by mental

> labor, and at that time had a wife and three children to support.[15] On one hand was wealth, popularity and honor, on the other appeared nothing but poverty and hard labor. But, notwithstanding his great ministerial success, and the prospect of ease and affluence (which frequently swerve the mind, and have an undue influence on too many who wear the sacred garb of religion, who for the sake of popularity and of wealth, can calm and lull to rest their conscientious scruples, and succumb to the popular church), yet his mind rose superior to these considerations.—Truth was his pursuit, and for truth he was prepared to make every sacrifice in his power.[16]

The Mormon prophet's statements give a completely different picture of Rigdon than the reader receives from Roberts' works, and Roberts' interpretation of Rigdon is the one Mormon seminary instructors teach to their pupils.

It was Rigdon's uncompromising, unquenchable, compulsive search for truth which compelled him to shun the ease and prominence of his Pittsburgh Baptist pastorate, reject Alexander Campbell's patronage, abandon the new farm which his Mentor congregation had just purchased for him, invoke the withering wrath of Joseph Smith, and, finally, decline Brigham Young's offer of economic security when he most needed it in his old age.

Rigdon was an intemperate man, but no more so than his religious colleagues whose statues stand in Temple Square in Salt Lake City or whose faces are carved in stone in front of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society building in Nashville. The great difference was that Rigdon's search for truth was not compatible with *any* organized religion of his time. He was a dreamer, a reformer, a crusader, and a dynamically popular preacher—a man whom religious historians have robbed of his rightful place in history.

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1. Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon—Early Mormon" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Chicago University, 1931), p. 1.

2. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), p. 36.

3. Amos S. Hayden, *A History of the Disciples on the Western Reserve* (Cincinnati, 1875), p. 204.

4. Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, p. 83.

5. It was first published in the *Millennial Harbinger* and then circulated to the Mormon converts as Alexander Campbell, *Delusions. An Analysis of the Book of Mormon: With an Examination of Its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretences to Divine Authority* (Boston, 1832).

6. Parley Parker Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Embracing His Life, Ministry and Travels, with Extracts in Prose and Verse from His Miscellaneous Writings* (New York, 1876), pp 65-66.

7. For a discussion of these sources see F. Mark McKiernan, "The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793-1876" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Kansas, 1968), p. 64.

8. Joseph W. White, "The Influence of Sidney Rigdon Upon the Theology of Mormonism" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1947), pp 75-80.

9. President James H. Fairchild, who had no connection with Mormonism,

claimed that "this manuscript [Spaulding's 'Manuscript Found'] clearly was not the basis of the book [*Book of Mormon*]." He also affirmed that the *Book of Mormon* was not written by Rigdon, "nor could the blundering syntax of the *Book of Mormon* have come from Rigdon's hand. He had a gift of speech which would have made the style distasteful and impossible to him." James H. Fairchild, "Manuscript of Solomon Spaulding and the *Book of Mormon*: A Paper Read Before the Western Reserve Historical Society, March 23, 1886," *Western Reserve Historical Society*, Tract No. 77, 185-200.

10. The dates of publication of the *Documentary History of the Church* are interesting: Volume I, 1902; Volume II, 1904; Volume III, 1905; Volume IV, 1908; Volume V, 1909; Volume VI, 1912; and Volume VII, 1932.

11. *Saints' Herald*, August 2, 1884.

12. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. I (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), pp. 521-522.

13. H. H. Smith, "Proper and Improper Use of History," *Journal of History*, Vol. II (1909), pp. 78-88.

14. *Times and Seasons*, April 15, 1843.

15. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1843.

16. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1843. The manuscript in the Church Historian's Office at Salt Lake City from which the *Times and Seasons* account was published is identical. It is the handwriting of Joseph Smith's secretary Robert B. Thompson, and it can be dated between October 3, 1840, and August 27, 1841. *The Millennial Star* in its 1852 supplement "History of Joseph Smith" on page 43 is also identical with the *Times and Seasons* printing on May 15, 1843.

F. Mark McKiernan teaches American history at Idaho State University; he wrote his doctoral dissertation at the University of Kansas on Sidney Rigdon.

# Incarnation or Spiritual Health: Two Views of the Nature of the Church

Malcolm L. Ritchie

*If the church is to follow the Incarnation approach many people will probably ask, "Why bother?" There are many large churches who do or can believe like that.*

Within the last five years there have been two major efforts within the RLDS Church to define its nature. Both approaches have been published by Herald House. Except that both are serious intellectual efforts, the two views have very little in common. They differ in their views of what God is like, in their evaluation of church history, in their estimates of the nature of man and society, and in their views of what the future of the church should be. These differences appear to lie behind much of the controversy and conflict which characterize church polity at the present time. Therefore it seems instructive to examine them in some degree of depth.

One approach is that contained in the book, *Spiritual Health*, written by Roy Cheville (1966). The other approach appears in two books. The first one, *The Body of Christ*, was written by Harold Schneebeck (1968). The second, *For What Purpose Assembled?* was written by Donald Landon and Robert Smith (1969).

### *Two Central Themes*

There is a central theme to each of the approaches. For the Schneebeck, Landon, Smith approach that central theme is the Incarnation. They begin with the idea that in Jesus Christ God appeared in human form. What Christ did reveals to us what we should do if we wish to be like him. The church as an organization carries on the work as "the body of Christ." What the church should do is what Jesus would do if he were here, to the extent of expending its life and resources in service.

The central theme in the Cheville approach is that Christians should be living lives of intelligent dedication in which the principles of spirituality blend with those of our physical, mental, and emotional natures in such a way that our lives will come closer to achieving the highest expression of our social, personal, and spiritual natures. This objective is called Spiritual Health. The church provides its participants an education in values, an opportunity to participate in those activities which provide an understanding of the principles of spiritual health, and the nuclei or laboratories in the development of the societal aspects of spiritual health.

### *What Is the Subject Matter?*

The Incarnation approach centers on an event—the Christ event. The significance of this event and the conclusions drawn from it are developed in a classical philosophical method. A series of logical deductions from the definition of the Christ event provide the answers to questions about the nature of the church and its program for action. The word *church* is therefore used in the sense of meaning all those who accept the concept of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

The Spiritual Health approach is as much history, sociology, psychology, and general science as it is theology. It affirms that the nature of God cannot be understood by us apart from our understanding of the nature of man and the nature of society. Our knowledge of each is imperfect and changing. We need the experiences of Joseph Smith, of Wallace Smith, and our own to help understand the experiences described in the *Bible.* We need the best knowledge we can obtain from all sources in order to reduce the likelihood of drawing conclusions which will not stand. And we need to try our conceptions in our own experience to test as well as to complement them.

### *What Is the Church?*

In the Incarnation approach the church consists of all people who have a serious commitment to the concept that Jesus Christ was God in human form. All such believers comprise the "body of Christ" and different church groups are separated only by the minor differences in their own social history. These differences are to be used for the purposes of esprit de corps and should not be allowed to separate the various parts of the body of Christ from functioning together in service. The analogy of the church with the body of Christ is carried to considerable lengths in this approach. The statement is made repeatedly that because Christ's life ended in death through service so the church should be willing to expend its life in service.

In the Spiritual Health approach the church is the RLDS Church. A continuity of experiences is seen in the background of the church from the Old Testament Hebrew to early Christian to Restoration, reorganization, and contemporary events. The focus is on religion as experience, especially as continuing experience. The RLDS Church is a growing edge in which religious experience and its interpretation interact. The church, its branches, and its members are nuclei for learning and development. Each interacts with the larger community in ways which can be mutually supportive and mutually educational.

### *Is the Approach Liberal or Fundamental?*

For the Incarnation approach the answer to this question is probably clearly "liberal." There is the conclusion that all Christian churches are a part of the same movement. There is a reformer's air about the clearly deduced answers to questions of procedure. There is a set of principles which provide a rationale to go and change the surrounding social scene. Most of all, there is a clear implication that RLDS members have been going about things wrong and that we should catch up with others.

The dichotomy between liberal and fundamental seems not to have meaning for the Spiritual Health approach. While the approach is consistent with the most up-to-date methods of gaining knowledge, there is a place for the most conservative believer. Religion is seen as experience and even those who do not think much can participate in the experience. Past experiences are seen to be of value at least in their preserving the possibility for experience with uplifting forces. For those who are willing to think and to learn, there is a nearly wide-open challenge.

### *Must the Membership Change?*

The Incarnation approach appears as a confrontation. The reader is met with a series of postulates and deductions each of which seems reasonable but which adds up to a considerable change in direction for the thinking of most RLDS church members. Perhaps a large percentage of the church population are members because of distincitve beliefs and practices. There can be considerable stress for many of these members who face the conception that the distinctive RLDS background is trivial. The Incarnation approach makes little attempt to establish the connection between the ideas the church member is now asked to accept and those conceptions which have caused him to be and to stay a member.

### *How Sound Is the Approach?*

Many positions which look reasonable and appear logically sound have caused their damage only to be revised after the damage was done. The tortures and death sentences of the Inquisition, for example, had a carefully reasoned theological basis upon which there was general agreement at the time. But hardly anybody agrees now with that reasoning. It is very important then that we look at any theological position from the standpoint of its soundness. One would not like to influence the lives and values of many people and then have to say later. "Oops, I made a mistake and I have misled you."

In the Incarnational approach the basic notion on which all the rest of the study follows is that God was revealed in Christ. As Schneebeck puts it, "The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the church has always understood as the ultimate revelation of the nature of God" (p. 55). There is no further support—just that statement. The terms are general and philosophic enough that it seems hard to question. But by being general and philosophic they can also conceal a weakness in supporting the kind of logical structure which the two books build upon that statement.

Let us examine first the phrase, ". . . has always understood." This means there has been general agreement and nobody has questioned it. The same statements could have been made about the theological basis for the Inquisition at the time. There is not enough support here to build upon. Next let us examine that part of the statement which says that ". . . the church has always understood as the ultimate revelation of the nature of God." Here it will be seen that the word *church* is used in the sense of the generalized Christian church, for it is an axiom in the RLDS Church that there has been no ultimate revelation. We are to be prepared for further illumination at any time. From the first experiences of Joseph Smith to the words of Wallace Smith that "This requisite [for reinterpretation] has always been present," there has been a continuing emphasis on the unfinished nature of knowledge of spiritual matters.

Another key point in the Incarnation approach is the idea that the dutiful church discerns where God is at work in order that Christians can go and combine their forces with His. This discernment process appears disarmingly simple, even to suggesting that it can be done by reading the morning paper (Landon, p. 31). And there are no safeguards suggested to prevent great error in case the discernment is faulty.

It requires a great deal of self-assurance for anyone to decide that he knows the mind of God and can discern where He is at work. The history of the writings of the prophets seems to indicate that even in their best moments the prophets have "seen through a glass darkly" and have obtained only a glimmer of the truth which was to be had. At best it seems a dangerous doctrine for one to believe that he can routinely interpret where God is at work without continual and careful efforts to protect against faulty interpretation.

Perhaps in this area the Incarnation approach suggests most clearly that it stems directly from Protestant theology without benefit of the developing ideas of the RLDS Church. With a long-standing practice and principle of continuing revelation, the RLDS Church has been developing a much more modest approach to knowledge. Statements of Joseph Smith and of Wallace Smith were cited above. Frederick M. Smith also wrote on the care which must be taken to temper interpretations. In *The Higher Powers of Man* he was explicit on the point of including a wide range of observations of all kinds in the interpretation of the meaning of revelatory experiences.

In *Spiritual Health* Cheville follows clearly the main stream of developing RLDS thought. He sees an understanding of the mind of God as an objective to be achieved rather than a process to be assumed. How are revelatory experiences to be interpreted? Through an understanding of the nature of man and the nature of society. The more we learn about these from all sources the better we will be able to interpret the mind of God. It is through learning of all kinds that we can evaluate and reinterpret even previous revelation. Our knowledge is always partial and we are always aware that a new knowledge may require that we reinterpret and reevaluate.

### *Which Is the Church?*

The two books which comprise the Incarnation approach are a serious attempt to free many people in the church from views that are narrow and too confining. In attempting to do this a whole approach has been lifted from Protestant theology. The logical foundations and the basic method are thus borrowed. But not everybody in the church has the narrow and confining views which the authors are fighting against. As a matter of fact there is and has been a growing body of thought within the church which is sharply different from the Protestant. It is different fundamentally because of the principle of continuing revelation and the intellectual humility which stems from it. It may be clearly expressed as a belief that the processes which produced the Bible are at work today and can be expected to go on working in the same way. Spiritual truth is interwoven with other kinds of truth and may not be untangled.

If the church is to follow the Incarnation approach many people will probably ask, "Why bother?" There are many large churches who do or can believe like that. One could be more effective with one of them and the personal cost would be much less.

On the other hand, the Spiritual Health approach takes full cognizance of the distinctive intellectual history of the Restoration and builds upon it. It is the fruit of many years of rich personal ministry in the RLDS context coupled with a penetrating and wide-ranging scholarship. Out of this distinctive background and penetrating analysis it points to an open and appealing possible future.

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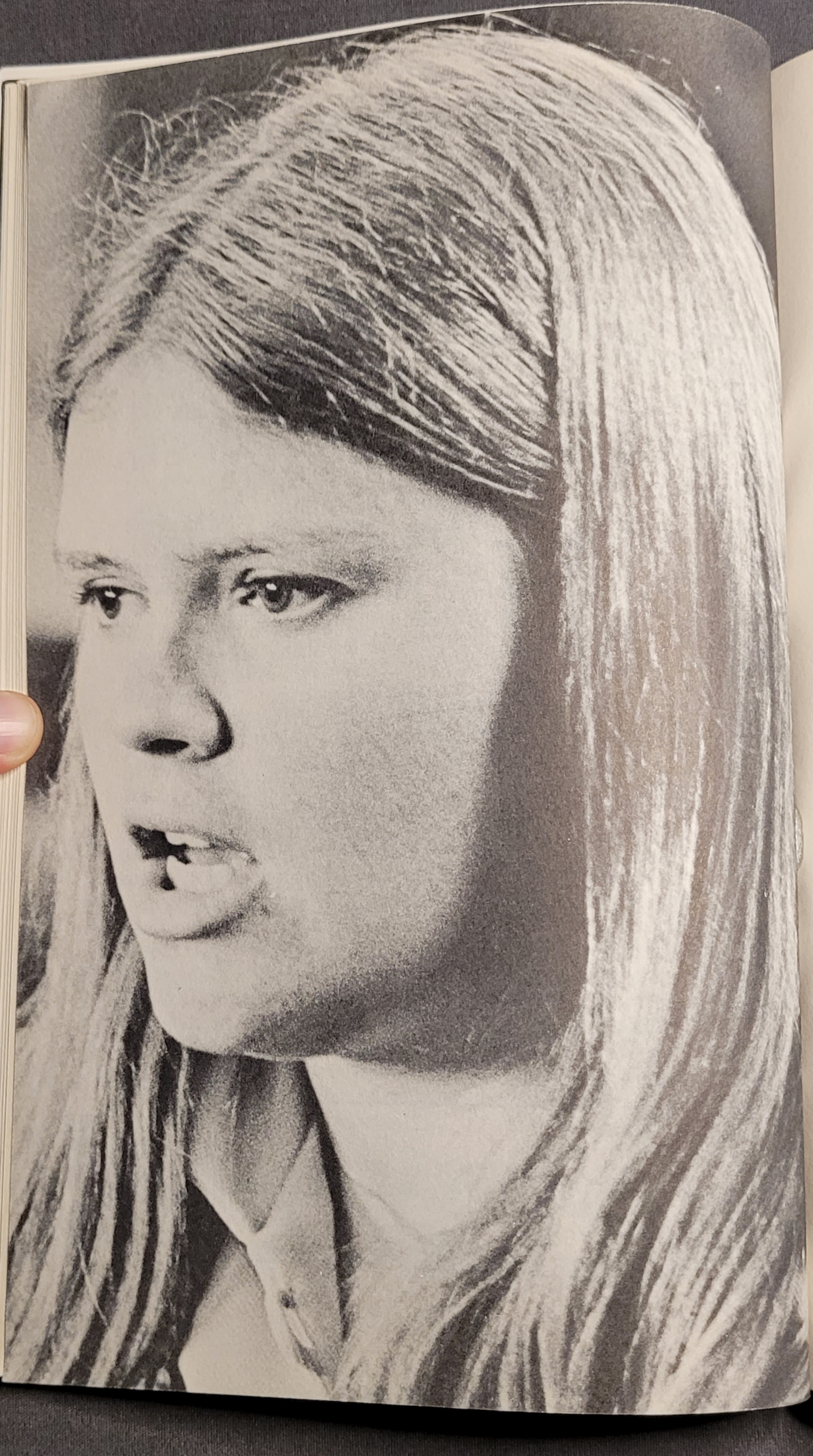
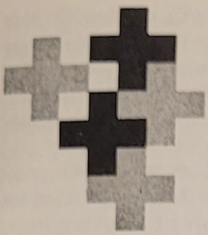
*Malcolm L. Ritchie is a professor of engineering at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, and a member of the Graceland College Board of Trustees.*





# To Use or Lose Today's Youth

Lee O. Hart

*We must put an end to the unfortunate noninvolvement of youth in the decision-making processes in the church and society.*

On the surface the title above might inadvertently lead one to feel that we are here basically concerned about "using" or involving our youth with the prime objective of "saving" them for the good of the institutional church. Not so! We use this title because it gets right at the heart of a great heresy currently affecting the church and society in a most unfortunate way. It has to do with how the adult church views children and youth. The thesis of this paper and the heart of the heresy is well described by the noted English lecturer and theologian Professor Fred Milson, "It is of course fatal for any institution to go on treating as children those who increasingly see themselves, and are seen, as adults."[1]

In support of the "use" of youth concept, we too are persuaded that the church needs the dedication of the unique talents of more of our youth—for the sake of her mission to the needy world. But our contention is that the ideas of "using" or "losing" our youth, wrongly conceived, can be dehumanizing and out of keeping with the redemptive process which Christ died to initiate.

We are here decrying the heresy of "using" our young people as a chess player uses his pawns or as some adults and institutions use youth—primarily for the good of the institution—be it home, church, or other community agency. Our objective is to suggest a new kind of attitude toward youth and a new kind of involvement of our youth in the home, local church, and society generally, for the inestimable value that will accrue directly and indirectly to us and which will make our homes, churches, and world more humane.

We first heard the use them or lose them concept expounded by G. E. Tickemyer in Los Angeles in the early fifties. Many youth leaders and church administrators have based their youth programming on a shallow understanding of this concept, best summarized perhaps in a "get them involved so they will stay with the church" concept. This has resulted in such efforts to involve youth as "using" them to tract a neighborhood, letting them "put on" the annual Youth Sunday service, encouraging them to "run their own Zion's League" (but not having a voice in the rest of branch life), letting them "think *our* ideas were really their own," etc.

Though some of the foregoing adult attitudes toward youth plus a great deal of hard work have resulted in a certain degree of success in youth ministries (as witnessed by the proliferation of youth camps and retreats, youth leadership camps, youth leadership in branch services, OYSC volunteers, etc.), truly successful disciple-producing youth ministry *to* or *with* our youth is still only a dream in most homes and a great percentage of our branches. Most youth simply do not consider themselves as first-class soldiers on the firing line with other adult Christians. Consequently, most youth consider our church an adult church, of and by adults, and is it not so? But let us not acquiesce! The current unrest of youth in society at large attests to the nonsuccess of the larger community's attempts to helpfully minister to and with youth there as well.

A word about a similar and related problem with reference to women may sharpen our views about youth. The very unfortunate male use of and attitude toward women has produced tragic results—a group who are either largely alienated or who now accept their substandard lot in relationship to men. In our society has not the female been placed on a sort of "slave pedestal" and viewed by the vast majority of males as their playthings and slaves? Is not woman's place seen by most men of the older generation at least to be near the sink and the stove and to be available to man's whims and lust? The church and nation are impoverished as a result.

We repeat that society's attitude toward women is not too dissimilar in effect to popular attitudes toward youth. This is foundational to the understanding of fathers' (and/or mothers') comments that "youth are to be seen and not heard," "you must wait till you grow up," "when you've had as much experience as I have," "we should let them have their say," or "after all we've done for you." It is unlikely that most adult members of the church purposely "put down" youth. Rather, they follow the lead of most of an entire society that is trapped with the problem. Historically, it has only been in the last generation of Western society where there has been a clearly definable youth culture—a special segment of one's life known as adolescence.[2] Previously, a person was either a child or an adult. There was no in-between period known as adolescence when an individual was no longer a child and not yet an adult. There was no period for seemingly unending education, summer vacation periods, youth group meetings, endless hours with TV instead of chores, and other "luxuries" associated now with adolescence.

In earlier societies a child in reality became an adult when he passed through certain post-pubescent initiation rites into adulthood. The rites varied according to tribe or class. Modern society is still trying to determine what to do with today's newfound period of adolescence or "youth" and, as all are aware, the answers are very slow in coming.

None can be open to the news of the nations today without having constant reminders that today's youth in even greater numbers are becoming more vocal in their deepseated disenchantment with their role in society. This is not true of the post high school years only. The careful observer will note that the percentage of high school youth similarly concerned and upset is growing rapidly, and the unrest is noticed in ever more radical forms of dissent.[3]

### *Any Suggestions?*

The new kind of attitude toward youth of which we have spoken might well be couched philosophically in three basic understandings:

1. That we not get up-tight about youth's very limited involvement presently, for this is certainly understandable. We have quite a history of keeping them "in their place." And we can be content to not rock the boat—that is, unless we want to really make them an integral and more productive part of our society.
2. That we might well resist every effort of the naïve to convince us "that this is just the same old problem society has always had" or that "any proposed radical changes are Communist-conspired and part of a sinister threat from abroad to weaken the Western world."
3. For our own mental health, we might well establish a new mind-set toward youth and then mobilize to do something about their present limited involvement.

Concretely we suggest three basic concepts or platforms for action which, if they merit your attention and action, will radically alter the quality of the life of youth in the future:

### *Concept No. 1—Adults Must Develop and Express Greater Faith and Trust in Youth*

Why? Because faith is not only the first principle of the gospel, but also of all of life! There is no other lasting solution to problems in human relationships. A society that mistrusts its youth has a shaky future or perhaps none at all.

> **There has been a mounting crescendo, a rising fury of backlash, from an American public that is experiencing sensations ranging from shaken confidence to indignation, if not unbridled rage, and that has tended to lose faith in its young people and its institutions of higher learning. Also, there is a deeply troubled younger generation that pleads that a society that mistrusts its youth has no future.[4]**

Every individual who is even vaguely mistrustful and skeptical about the intentions of today's youth might take particular note.

To restore one's faith in youth we challenge you, no matter what your present position on this particular issue, to attempt soon to engage youth—individuals or in a group—in in-depth conversation. Try to get beneath the peripheral things that divide society today and find out how they really feel about the overarching issues in which you share concern.

Then, when you have heard them express themselves, we challenge you to evidence your faith in them to the limit of your opportunity. Orally commend them, personally and in public. Let them know you have faith in their good intentions and in their ability to take leadership in the making of a new world. Do this candidly, but all the while remembering how much adult approbation meant to you when you were their age.

In the local church the pastor is a key figure and is a symbol of the faith, or lack of faith, of the adult community in her youth. We would suggest that the pastor take seriously the suggestion that some type of "Youth Council" be called into being in the branch whether it has many youth or few. The suggestion is expanded in more detail in the 1969 and 1970 Youth Week materials.[5] Briefly, it is suggested that the pastor call together periodically a small group of representative youth and a like number of adults who are particularly concerned about and conversant with the world of youth, and that he take time to *listen* to them, encouraging them to open up and share their concerns and suggestions with him. The objective is that the youth learn beyond any shadow of doubt that their pastor has faith in them and their ideas and wants their very best contribution.

The foregoing is in keeping with the spirit of the recently released report of President Nixon's Commission on Campus Disorder which suggests "that the President take steps to assure that he be continuously informed of the views of students and blacks, important constituencies in this nation."[6] We might wish that the situations that promoted the appointment of this Commission might never be in evidence in the church, but on more careful analysis might it not be that the disaffected thousands of our church youth have also protested in the most effective way they know how—by losing faith in the institution? Express your faith in youth!

### *Concept No. 2—Involve Them Where the Action Is—At the Decision-making Level*

Most youth have deep and growing though often unspoken reservations about the wisdom, integrity, and ethical motivations of many adults in their world—especially leaders in government and industry with whom they disagree, but also often with their coaches and youth leaders, teachers and principals, and their parents as well. Why not let us all humbly agree that we too share these concerns and are regretful at the evidences of our own inept leadership? As we let them know that their criticisms are often valid, why not take the golden opportunity to try to involve them in more significant ways—not in a spirit of tokenism but in a genuine effort to give them opportunity to be heard and to be helpful? Such action may help them see that some at least of the older generation are attempting to undo the wrong of excluding them in important decision making that has often been perpetuated unknowingly by our contemporaries.

You may well question whether most teen-agers know enough about budgeting, establishing politics, and evaluating the problems and progress of institutions to help much at their tender age in making weighty decisions. However, the experience of an increasing number of organizations points out that *youth do have a valuable contribution to make.* They are able to bring fresh insights desperately needed in many facets of society including the churches.[7] Did not the church find this out at the last World Conference when the largest number of youthful delegates ever elected made some major contributions to the Conference? The action of the church in many districts and stakes making possible the election of a more normal percentage of youthful delegates is certainly in keeping with the forward-looking movement of other church bodies.

Recently a publication of the largest collaborative group of church leaders in the United States made the following recommendations to the member denominations prior to the election of delegates to a national triennial meeting:

> To insure greater youth involvement in the upcoming Assembly, a number of steps have been taken, among them:
> —"Member denominations have been asked to supply information as to what youth are already in their General Assembly delegations.
> —"Vacancies in present delegations are being identified and denominations will be asked to fill these with youth."[8]

The reader might well remember that this recommendation was given to churches whose size ranges from small churches such as ours to a denomination of 12,000,000. The General Assembly referred to was the top level meeting of the National Council of Churches in America.

Similarly, we were interested to note in mid-November that a member of the Kansas City, Missouri, school board recently indicated that the board was making every effort to include youth in every possible way on school committees and commissions which are involved in top level decision making in the high schools and to some degree in the junior high schools. A school superintendent from a nearby county indicated at the same meeting that several principals would soon be relieved of their responsibilities if they were not willing to accept a similar point of view. He indicated that it was regrettable that officials were slow to act until serious problems were evident in the school.

The experience of the church in serious involvement of youth is limited. We know of perhaps a dozen instances where youth have been or are being involved in increasingly significant ways in congregations, districts, and stakes. We have heard of some fair to very good results from these experiments, and we have not heard of any resulting problems for administrators. May we suggest that in the sphere of influence where you work you expand this approach in some of the following ways:

1. Place youth on boards, councils, committees at every level where they can conceivably make a contribution. Perhaps for various

reasons youth ought not to sit regularly with the First Presidency, Council of Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric in Joint Council assembled. However, is it not conceivable that knowledgeable teen-agers as well as college students might well be brought before the Council periodically on a consulting basis? Is it not conceivable that these brethren who are influenced primarily by the adults with whom they work day by day might receive a freshness of insight and a renewal of their appreciation of how the fifty-one percent under twenty-five years feel through such intimate and formal association with some of them? If this be true for the Joint Council, might it not be true at many other levels of administration in the church and society?

2. Place youth on both standing and ad hoc committees in stakes and districts. Should not youth be involved in helping to plan their reunion experiences, and have the opportunity to help plan their youth camping experience?

3. We have witnessed youth participation on branch building committees, in meeting with the priesthood of branches, in sitting in church school classes with adults, and in other ways letting their influence and best thinking be felt at the branch level. Might not some branch problems be solved in advance by such efforts?

4. Many branches have a regular program of involving their youth periodically in worship services—not just to help with the offering or prayers, but to prepare five-, ten-, or fifteen-minute presentations designed to assist the congregation in its worship or to help the adult congregation see how youth view certain questions of mutual concern. Our conviction is that this should be done in every branch of the church where there are any youth at all. It might well become a regular feature in the church as it is in other rapidly growing denominations. The experience of this writer is that the contribution of youth, when solicited carefully with adequate advance preparation, often surpasses in quality the attempts at ministry of many of us who are older. We would recommend that such ministry *not* be reserved for Youth Sunday morning alone, but that the branch find opportunities for such participation periodically throughout the year. Letters asking for suggestions or counsel related to preparation, topics for presentations, etc., would be most welcome in the Christian Education Department.

### *Concept No. 3—Open Your Heart to Youth in Other Appropriate Ways That Inter-generational Tensions May Be Alleviated*

1. Listen. Be open to youth's point of view. Talk over problems while they are small.
2. Show genuine interest in youth's concerns—their friends, music, dress, and recreation.
3. Make your own home a place where youth are welcome.
4. Vocally praise and encourage youth. Harping criticism and blame are a two-edged sword.
5. Try hard to be a model for youth rather than their judge.

6. Show youth you consider them worthy of exactly the same respect and courtesy as adults—truly first-class citizens.
7. Allow children and youth to do the things they are capable of doing for themselves, even if it takes a little more time.
8. Be willing but not pushy in sharing your insights and experience.
9. Volunteer to assist in the ministry given by your church and community youth leaders.
10. Show abundant, nonpossessive love to your own children. Respect the privacy of their room, their mail, and their thoughts.[9]

Among us are those who feel that society today is already much too youth oriented—with resulting vandalism, campus unrest, high school disorders, and undue emphasis on little leagues, youth groups, etc. Some persons feel what is really needed is more ironhanded discipline. There may well be at least a grain of truth in what is said, but that is not the core of our problems. The central need is for the adult engineers of society to more successfully involve our youth in those ways that are truly meaningful. As we do this not only will the behavior of alienated youth improve but the church may well be able to cull out any educationally unsound youth oriented activities that really fall into the category of busywork or that should be handled by the school, the community recreation department, or others. The hard task will be to determine just which of these activities really serve us inadequately.

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1. *World Christian Education,* Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 16.
2. See Donald Landon's article, "What the Gospel Says About Generational Tensions," *Saints' Herald,* Ocotber 1970, p. 13.
3. Note Landon's analysis of this as an earmark of a society undergoing radical change.
4. John Darling, Jr., "A Comment on Dissent: Why? . . .,Why Not?" *University Bulletin,* October-November, 1970, p. 4.
5. Available through the Christian Education Department—free.
6. "Report of Commission on Campus Unrest" as reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education,* October 5, 1970, p. 3.
7. Donald Landon, "What the Gospel Says About Generational Tensions," p. 12.
8. "Greater Youth Role Urged for Council's Assembly," *Tempo* (newspaper of National Council of Churches), February 15, 1969.
9. Youth Week Order of Worship folder, Lee Hart, 1970.

*Lee O. Hart of the RLDS Department of Christian Education has been active in ministry to youth for several years.*

# *A POEM UPON THE DEATH OF CALIFORNIA INSPIRED NOT BY AN ACTUAL PASSING BUT BY OUR VICE PRESIDENT'S OBSERVATION THAT SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND HAD AIR POLLUTION TOO*

"California," wrote an old friend,
"is all we have.
Ice should not be endured
by a dying people,

and those Eastern summers
could make conservatives of us all.
Come home again
and fulfill yourself among the constant leaves."

I said certainly yes.
And after preparing myself
with water and razors and bread,
I fled forthwith to the coast.

There Ronald R. was making it
safe for hypocrisy
and unsafe for the unwilling,
Los Angeles was consuming itself

amid a shower of hardening stars,
San Francisco was receiving
extreme unction from Standard Oil
unceremoniously,

and every woman I had lost
was fading
unelegantly
into perfumed ashes.

Thoughtbroken, I withdrew in some haste
to pursue ecstasy and ignorance
in another state
of a most untidy American mind.

Jon Wallace

# On Means and Ends: Landon Has It Backwards

Howard Liggett

*The goal of religion is to minister the gospel to individuals that they may, by assenting to it, be redeemed, saved unto eternal life.*

The article by Donald D. Landon in the April 1970 issue of *Courage* so tantalizingly invites rebuttal that my modest defenses have crumbled, and I have not the resources of will power to resist the temptation.

The "debate over religious education" rages on; but as Landon well knows, on the non-liberal side it was and is an agonizing outcry against RLDS apostasy-at-the-top and against the calculated planned-in-detail subversion and destruction of the Restoration as such.

Certainly there was anguished protest against the anti-*Book of Mormon*, anti-Restoration proposed "underlying philosophical basis" for a subversive new curriculum outpouring of Religious Education Department teaching materials; but the curriculum position papers and the proposed new anti-Restoration teaching materials represented just the suddenly visible tip of an anti-Restoration propaganda iceberg, which for three years had been kept carefully screened, from being fermented in the Department of Religious Education.

The article gets under way by hammering a recurrent Landon theme, to wit, a determined, persistent put-down of distinctive RLDS doctrinal teachings (the fullness of the pure Restored Gospel), a characteristic Landon wail about what he terms "propositions" (Landon's term for doctrine, for gospel teachings) being continually and ill-advisedly offered to people for their *assent* (a bad word in Landon's lexicon)—a most deplorable RLDS practice which endlessly distresses Landon's anti-Restoration, pro-Protestantism sensibilities. He thinks we err in that we improperly make this propounding of "propositions" (for *assent* by the hearer) the end and object of religion; whereas the end and object of religion, Landon conceives to be *discipleship:*

> What is the goal of Christian nurture? The sciptures do not equivocate on the question. Men are to be taught to be disciples—persons who can re-present in their own lives the life of radical love set before them in Christ Jesus. . . . This style of life called discipleship is the end or goal of faith (p. 6).

Of course, he is quoting not scripture but some theological seminary professor. He continues:

> Few would argue that in the final analysis, the true mark of Christian identity is the love that is shown, not the beliefs that are held. Our problem is the willingness to act radically on this premise, to put discipleship above belief and truly subject belief to the service of discipleship (p.10).

That's a put-down for belief and a build-up for the seminarian doctrine of discipleship. Elsewhere we find:

> . . . a doctrine of revelation arose which suggested that God communicated divinely guaranteed truths to the church. This promoted the feeling that what Christianity really amounted to was a set of truths superior to human knowledge available any place else. . . . Faith was less a whole-life response to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and more an assent to a set of divinely delivered truths. Faithfulness became more a matter of espousing the right beliefs than doing the will of God (p. 7).

Of course, espousing and teaching the right beliefs *is* doing the will of God. But Landon flaunts his obsession, "discipleship," at us:

> And it is here that beliefs, doctrines, scriptures, history and heritage ought to become pressed into the service of discipleship. . . . For if they truly illuminate, illustrate, instruct and motivate discipleship, their validity is functionally established. But if they are taught essentially as ends in themselves, items to be mastered, propositions to be affirmed, beliefs to be assented to, then their power has been compromised and their authority unestablished (p. 6).

If you have in mind a bit of teaching of divinely guaranteed gospel truths, perhaps you should bear in mind that Landon is "agin it." Its validity, no less, all hinges on whether it contributes, to Landon's satisfaction, to "discipleship." The main thesis of Landon's article is that we RLDS go around teaching the gospel because we confuse the means (faith, doctrine) with the real end and goal of religion (discipleship): "To propose a creed or a set of beliefs as a focus of our faith again confuses means and ends. The temptation is to conclude that Christianity is essentially intellectual—words and ideas that are to be learned for the sake of assent. . . . That we shall need beliefs and doctrines to guide us in that new life is clear, but they shall be means and not ends" (pp. 8, 10).

Assent implies personal compliance with the thing taught. Those who hear the gospel message and assent to it tend to be the very ones heeding such divinely given admonitions as this: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (III Nephi 6:33).*

### *Opposing Concepts of Discipleship*

I submit that Landon is the one who has succeeded in confusing himself. In this particular article it surfaces only scantily, but Landon has a limited and inflexible concept of what discipleship means. I have read his handbook, *For What Purpose Assembled*, and his two-part "The Church and its Ministries," (*Saints' Herald*, November and December 1970 issues), and my word for the Landon concept of discipleship is do-gooding. His concept of religion itself is excruciatingly simple. Religion is do-gooding. Do-gooding is not only the end and object of religion; it is the sum and substance, the shape and content, the be-all and do-all of religion. Do-gooding is all there is to religion, to evangelism, to stewardship, to Zion-building, according to Landon.

By "discipleship" Landon means getting out and working in your political precinct under the guidance of liberal politicians for those things being contemporaneously promoted under their banners, e.g. "social justice," subsidized housing, inner-city renewal, tax-money-give-away programs, "share the wealth," championing of minorities' causes, and so forth. If you have any doubts of the literal truth of this statement, a thoughtful reading of the first article of *For What Purpose Assembled* is recommended. And in "The Church and Its Ministries," he writes:

> The local (RLDS) church is participating in God's mission when its members are motivated to relate to the various agencies, organizations and institutions of the community, when it assists in the resolution of the priority problems—personal, political, economic and social—facing the community (p. 48).
>
> Participation in or financial contributions to various organizations also may be a part of personal Zion-building—for example, PTA, Citizens Goals Committees, American Civil Liberties Union, Council on Religion and Race, Wilderness Club, welfare rights organizations, and student governments. (*Saints' Herald*, November 1970, p. 31).

It seems to me that to Landon and our political liberals the true gospel of salvation means nothing. They do not need the gospel nor want to be bothered with it. The continuing RLDS "debate" is not just "over religious education"; it is over the issue of substituting do-gooding for the teaching and ministry of the gospel.

Landon is determined that we are to abandon the teaching and ministry of the gospel and to substitute for it what he calls discipleship, namely, do-gooding. This objective, this program is labelled apostasy by loyal Restorationists who strenuously object to such substitution and to such a definition of discipleship.

Landon gives but short shrift to the concept of a disciple as one who transmits Christ's teachings, The Word, the true doctrine of Christ. For that matter, he gives short shrift to The Word. To quote his *Courage* article again:

> God did not give us an idea or a doctrine, he gave us a person, Christ Jesus (p. 6).
>
> We do well to remember that God has never guaranteed us that he will give us true ideas or doctrines. . . . If the basis of our religious life is a relationship with what we feel are infallible truths then we probably have great reason to be insecure since it is altogether possible that as knowledge increases we may find ourselves separated from what we had felt was infallibly so (p.9).

Landon thinks our preoccupation with teaching the gospel gets in the way of our being disciples:

> The fact that these are the measurables by which our identity is distinguished by other church bodies, and that qualitative distinction from other churches has been a preoccupation for many—has led some to establish proper belief as the ultimate purpose of Christian faith. With this developing mind-set one is tempted to believe that it is more important to espouse Latter Day Saint beliefs than to practice Christianity (p. 6).

By practicing Christianity, he means "discipleship," e.g., do-gooding:

> The risk . . . is that in being preoccupied with building up a repository of truth one will assume that that is really the goal of the faith. The claims of the "love ethic" become second to the claims of the "truth ethic." It almost appears that it is more important to *believe* the right thing than it is to *do* the right thing (p. 8).

Again, "love ethic" means do-gooding. Landon is against teaching doctrine, professedly on the grounds that we do not "now have a final hold on Truth, as if we ever could." And from this thesis, Landon deduces the conclusion that we should do no teaching of doctrine:

> The creation of any statement of theological or doctrinal interpretation which suggests finality or inclusiveness is in violation both of the nature of faith and the nature of revelation. All theological and doctrinal formulations are approximate . . . they are all historically conditioned and provisional, and become tyrannical if absolutized (p. 7).

Here we see the liberal's objection to that bugaboo "orthodoxy" surfacing. Orthodoxy hampers individual freedom. Do away with anything definite. Do away with all moral law, all divine commandments, all doctrine, all dogma. For, what you teach today, you may tomorrow find was wrong! So, play it safe; do no teaching. Down with orthodoxy! Make way for *freedom*, for spiritual anarchy. None of this teaching gospel truths . . . until and unless we get a final hold on Truth . . . "as if we ever could."

I do not think Landon has cited an actual example of these objectionable "propositions" against which he rails. But what it comes down to, in every instance, is that Landon *doesn't want the gospel taught.* He doesn't want people learning and teaching doctrine. This determination to abandon the teaching and ministry of the gospel underlies all of the RLDS apostasy now threatening the very survival of the Restoration. There are those of us who object to all this. We call it subversion of the Restoration. Perpetrated by a Landon who professes to be RLDS, a disciple of Jesus Christ, we call it betrayal of Him and of His Restoration.

### *What Is a Disciple?*

We have now set before us in stark relief the question: What is a disciple of Jesus?

What were the original twelve disciples of Jesus? Were not they basically men who learned, absorbed, *believed and taught* the things that Jesus said men must do if they are to have eternal life? Is not this teaching of Jesus' gospel the very essence of their discipleship, and of ours? By what authority is do-gooding now being substituted for teaching the gospel? Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Moroni 4:86). But Landon knows better: "The primary focus of faith is Jesus Christ who is not reducible to propositions. . . . We simply cannot be content to communicate canons of belief and feel we have served the faith" (pp. 7, 11).

1. All scriptures define discipleship as *the teaching and ministry of the gospel*, the gospel of individual redemption and salvation. This concept of discipleship Landon wants us to abandon, on his personal say-so, in flat contradiction to all scripture. He wants discipleship defined as do-gooding, no more, no less; and he won't take no for an answer. We loyal Restorationists balk. We call this apostasy. We call it human rebellion against the Word of God, the quintessence of sin. We just don't recognize Landon as an authority qualified to revoke scripture.

2. The perpetual hostility that Landon exhibits toward the teaching of and assenting to gospel principles, I say, is the spirit of anti-Christ. And it is the importing and entrenching of this seminarian anti-gospel-of-Christ satanic spirit in the Auditorium, notably in the Religious Education Department and the First Presidency, which is what the "debate" is all about. Some of us don't like it. We don't appreciate having that spirit wash over us and the coming-up RLDS generation in wave upon wave of propaganda emanating from the Auditorium. We see clearly and prophetically its satanic objective, *the destruction of the Restoration*, which Restoration we know to be the work of Jesus Christ in these latter days. We call all this subversion.

3. Landon presumes to speak with authority on the subject of our being "in relationship to God," and of what that relationship is. In so doing, he trespasses inexcusably into an area of subject matter—the gospel message—where his utter, abysmal ignorance should constrain him to have the decency not to tread. Landon simply does not grasp the gospel message, the obvious reason being that he does not want to and refuses to open his mind to it.

Landon's misconception of discipleship is rooted in his misunderstanding of what the gospel message is, of what God has been saying to fallen man through the gospel message. He commits the elemental error of proclaiming that *altruism*, e.g. do-gooding, represents the end and object and only goal of religion and of life. He does not grasp the divinely proclaimed fact that the gospel is a personal message from Deity to every individual, concerned directly with that individual's own personal eternal survival (eternal life versus eternal death) . . . that the law of survival *is* the first law, and properly and inevitably so, in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical realm; that such personal eternal spiritual survival is every person's legitimate first concern, to which the whole gospel message is unashamedly addressed (as well as the whole divine plan of redemption, and the entire divine project of creation):

> Now this is the commandment, Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of

> the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel (III Nephi 12:33, 34).

The goal of religion is to minister the gospel to individuals that they may, by assenting to it, be redeemed, saved unto eternal life in celestial glory, which is companionship with God, which is the ultimate divine purpose. But Landon jumps to the conclusion that all this ministerial concern for the individual's eternal spiritual survival is "selfish," unworthy, to be decried; to be abjured in favor of noble participation in the altruistic struggle to create a gospel-less welfare state. He has yet to grasp the elemental principle that his cherished love ethic will fall automatically into proper place in each individual's experience when and only if man will just do it God's way, to wit:

a. Believers teach the gospel (the true gospel)

b. Others hear and assent to, accept, obey the gospel message, gospel principle by gospel principle: Faith, Repentance, Baptisms, Enduring to the end; and that if one by-passes the above divinely prescribed procedure, there will be nothing else of value, certainly no ministering to the needs of others:

> And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel, then will the Father shew forth his own works in it; but if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you, they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return.
>
> Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you, that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me; and my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, I might draw all men unto me (III Nephi 12:22-26).

### *A Question of Means or Ends?*

Landon's article is entitled "A Question of Means or Ends," his theme being that we RLDS are led astray by our "particularism" mania for wanting to be distinctive, denominationally speaking, to the point where we allow the teaching of doctrine and beliefs to loom up as an end in itself instead of properly holding such things in true perspective as merely the means to the desired end of all religion, namely, discipleship, namely, do-gooding. He does not perceive that individual regeneration and redemption and salvation, pursuant to the gospel plan, must come first. Without it, there lies ahead, not service to others, but spiritual death: "But remember, that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state, and the devil hath all power over him" (Mosiah 8:77).

What Landon fails to perceive is that individual regeneration, redemption and eternal survival not only is a legitimate ministerial concern, it is *the* mandatory first concern of all ministry. It is the primary end and objective of all religion, attainable only through the teaching and ministry of the gospel, and the only possible basis for constructively resolving all human relationships.

Landon has it backwards. The teaching of the true gospel of Jesus Christ *is* the mission of His church, not do-gooding. It is the primary duty and function of priesthood, the end and the object of all ministry, the reason for the Restoration (the fullness of the gospel restored), and the area wherein the Restored Church of Jesus Christ with its additional illuminating light of latter day revelation stands uniquely qualified to do the job.

The gospel contains within itself a built-in requirement for a *personal response* from all who hear it, beginning with *assent* to its truth and validity (faith). It is perfectly normal and proper for RLDS evangelists to encourage such assent. Not to do so would make evangelical ministry an exercise in futility: ". . . and he that believeth not in me and is not baptized shall be damned" (III Nephi 5:35).

Do-gooding is not the end and object of religion, nor the definition of discipleship. The teaching and ministry and acceptance of the gospel constitute the end and the object of religion, and the only road to discipleship. Teaching the gospel is what we are divinely commanded to do. Elaborately manufactured objections to that are anti-Christ:

> Ye must repent and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things. . . . This is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this, buildeth upon my rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil. . . .
>
> O the wise and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord God; wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell (III Nephi 5:39:-42; 12:18).

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*All *Book of Mormon* quotations are taken from the 1908 Authorized Edition of the Reorganized Church.

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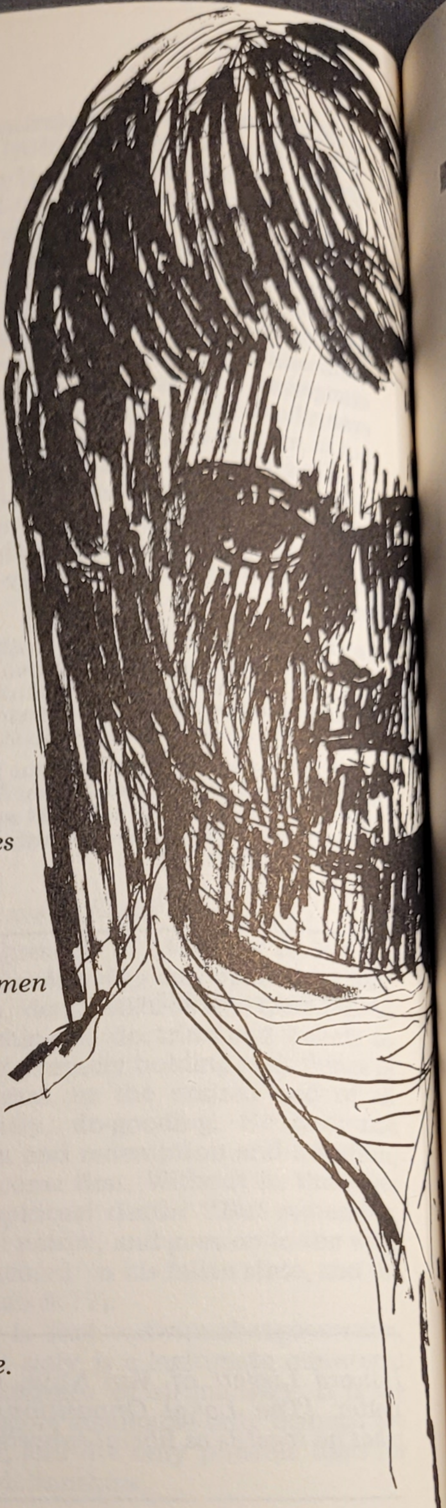
*Howard Liggett of Van Nuys, California, is the author of the* TLO *Letter [The Loyal Opposition], a monthly letter which opposes what he regards as liberal subversion in the RLDS Church.*



## AT NIGHT ACROSS THE HALL IN ROGER'S EMPTY ROOM

*Air throbs through the window shades*
*like slow blood*
*from his head.*

*The room is humming silence*
*and two dusty lamps bow like clergymen*
*casting shadows*
*as quiet and capricious*
*as Roger himself.*

*He seemed so content with his pigs*
*and with the green grass*
*in Nebraska*
*that no one bothered to know him,*

*and now his eyes are closets*
*closed hard against the night,*
*and the bare walls glare down at me*
*like unwritten pages of a suicide note.*

*Chris Barr*

# Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Church and the Man for Others

Robert Mesle

*The Church of Christ exists only where there are people willing to give themselves up to share in the suffering of Christ in the world through being for others.*

The theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer speaks powerfully to us today because it grows out of a historical situation as tense and critical as our own and because it is spoken by a man who faced boldly and prophetically the issues of his time—issues we have inherited and will pass on. We can best understand that theology by first examining Bonhoeffer's involvement in the struggle against Hitler and the Reich Church Hitler sought to build.

Bonhoeffer saw the issues clearly from the beginning. The conflict centered around two areas: "The Fuhrer Principle," a state church with loyalty to Hitler; and "racial conformity," a purely "German" church purged of Jews. By August of 1933, Bonhoeffer knew that it was impossible to remain in a church which accepted these two principles and gave his full support to the opposition group which eventually became known as the Confessing Church. His own efforts lay in three areas: the Confessing Church's identity struggle, its representation in the ecumenical movement, and the Confessing Church's illegal seminary at Finkenwalde.

August of 1933 saw the confessional experts of the opposition gathered at Bethel to begin outlining their declaration against the Reich Church. The purpose of the Bethel Confession, in which Bonhoeffer had a large part, was to force the German Christians (Hitler's group) to clarify their positions so that errors and motives would be more obvious. During this time Bonhoeffer wrote to his grandmother:

> It is becoming increasingly clear that what we are going to get is a big, popular, national church whose nature cannot be reconciled with Christianity, and that we must be prepared to enter upon entirely new paths which we shall then have to tread. The real question is between Germanism and Christianity, and the

> sooner the conflict comes out into the open the better. Nothing could be more dangerous than its concealment.[1]

The fruit of this and other efforts was the birth of the Pastors' Emergency League. The Emergency League pledged itself "1. To a new allegiance to the Scriptures and confessions, 2. to resist infringement of these, 3. to afford financial help to those affected by the law or by force (meaning especially emigrant Jews) and 4. to reject the Aryan clause."[2]

Bonhoeffer was convinced by this time, however, that being the "opposition" was not enough. The Reich Church was not the Church of Christ, and the opposition had not yet assumed this responsibility and did not until a year later. In May of 1934, the Barmen Synod officially denounced the Reich Church, laying the foundation for the positive action at the Dahlem Synod in October.

> Amongst other things they declared: We call upon the Christian congregations, their pastors and elders, to ignore any instructions received from the former Reich Church Government and its authorities and to refrain from cooperating with those who wish to continue to obey that same church government. We call upon them to adhere to the directions of the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church and of its recognized organs.[3]

Bonhoeffer, a pastor in London since the fall of 1933, had been pushing the Ecumenical Council to recognize this situation long before the Dahlem Synod. Understandably, then, he saw this as a demand by the Confessing Church for recognition as the only legitimate German Evangelical Church. "He now strenuously denied the false assumption that the Confessing Church was a separate free church alongside the Reich Church—an assumption that would have been welcome to many."[4]

In the spring of 1935, to avoid the influence of the Reich Church over its pastoral candidates, the Confessing Church established five seminaries under a Council of Brethren. Bonhoeffer was made director of the seminary which eventually settled in the small country town of Finkenwalde. He used the opportunity to experiment with the idea of a Christian community and established a House of Brethren coexistent with the seminary. He planned the program along lines which reminded both his colleagues and students uneasily of a monastery, including daily meditation and prayers of intercession for those of the church imprisoned by the Nazis. Yet the Finkenwalde experience was quite successful despite harrassment and eventual closure by the Gestapo.

In June of 1939, Bonhoeffer was finally persuaded to flee to America, but from the very first he knew that he could not stay. He had planned to stay a year; but as the political situation grew more tense, he realized even a year was too long. The final decision was tremendously difficult. Nevertheless, despite the urgings of his friends to stay and their emphasis on the contribution he could make in America and the danger he would face in Germany, he had already made his decision to return and it had only to be acknowledged. He explained it in a letter to Reinhold Niebuhr:

> I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. . . . Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security.[5]

Despite being closely watched by the Gestapo, being barred from Berlin, and being required to report his activities regularly, Bonhoeffer was able to work actively as a conspirator through the Abwehr (Military Intelligence Department), which was the only major intelligence division retaining autonomy from the Gestapo. It was headed and thoroughly infiltrated with conspirators. Supposedly working as a spy for the state, he was able to obtain diplomatic papers allowing him to travel freely abroad where he put his ecumenical connections to full use. Finally, when the assassination of Hitler was accepted as the only alternative, he gave information about the planned coup to the Allies in the hope that if it was successful they might be persuaded to negotiate with a new government. The attempt failed, of course, and on April 5, 1943, Bonhoeffer was arrested and placed in Tegel Prison. After two years of periodic interrogation he was executed at the Flossenburg extermination camp on April 9, 1945, just a few days before its capture by the Allies.

### *Theology*

As noted previously Bonhoeffer's theology speaks to us out of a period which is critical theologically as well as politically. It comes to us from a brilliant mind immersed with others, like Buber, Tillich, and Barth, in the quest to draw meaning from an existential frame of reference. The effort to express his insights forced him to redefine the basic vocabulary of Christianity, a situation which places great demands on us if we hope to tap this outstanding human resource.

Bonhoeffer's theology was always rooted in Christology. But in contrast to the "How" of traditional Christology—How can Jesus be God and man?—Bonhoeffer posed the question of "Who"—"Who Christ really is, for us today."[6] He rejected the religious (otherworldly) Christ-God which draws us out of the world and shrinks before our increasing knowledge. Bonhoeffer pointed out that we use God as an explanation for what we don't yet understand and hold him responsible for solving our insoluble problems. To facilitate these functions we develop doctrines and ritual by which we define and control God. To create a market for this religious solution machine (*deus ex machina*) we use "religious blackmail," i.e., we prey upon man's weakness until we convince him he needs our religion. But the result is that we gradually push God out of the world entirely:

> Religious people speak of God when human knowledge (perhaps simply because they are too lazy to think) has come to an end, or when human resources fail—in

> fact it is always the *deus ex machina* that they bring on to the scene, either for the apparent solution of insoluble problems, or as strength in human failure—always, that is to say, exploiting human weakness or human boundaries. Of necessity, that can go on only till people can by their own strength push these boundaries somewhat further out, so that God becomes superfluous as a *deus ex machina*.[7]

But Bonhoeffer argued that man lives "in a world come of age," not that man has overcome his faults but that he can no longer be kept under the tutelage of the religious "God": "Man has learnt to deal with himself in all questions of importance without recourse to the 'working hypothesis' called 'God.' . . . For the last hundred years or so it has also become increasingly true of religious questions; it is becoming evident that everything gets along without 'God.' . . . 'God' is being pushed more and more out of life, losing more and more ground."[8] Subsequently, Bonhoeffer concluded that "we are moving towards a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious anymore."[9] But he never suggested that Christianity must be lost with religion. Rather, he asked, "What is a religionless Christianity?"[10] or more precisely, "how to claim for Jesus Christ a world that has come of age."[11]

Bonhoeffer's answer to a religionless world was "God as 'Christ existing as community.' "[12] Here, too, the root of his thought was Christ, "The man for others," but to understand it we should probably begin with the idea of man. "Man" for Bonhoeffer, did not mean the organism but the complete person with qualities which make him a human, a person, rather than merely humanoid. Love, hope, intelligence, faith, and self-sacrifice are such qualities. Putting them in one package we have a phrase which all Christians should be able to grasp quickly: being for others, or having existence for others, i.e., other-centeredness as opposed to self-centeredness. Bonhoeffer used this phrase not as a substitute for "Christian love," but rather to indicate a life which is totally and perpetually (instead of only occasionally) directed by selfless love. A person who has this being for others is most fully human, not a mere organism. Thus, when Bonhoeffer spoke of God as Creator, he meant that God calls us out of egocentrism into existence for others and thus creates of us real men.

But man can be for others only in the midst of others. When God creates a man, that man becomes part of the community of saints, the communion of those who have being for others and for each other. Here we have "Christ existing as community." In this community, Christ, the man for others, has being in the concrete reality of the everyday world. It should be emphasized that for Bonhoeffer, "The community is the body of Christ. Body here is not a metaphor. The community is the body of Christ, it does not *represent* the body of Christ."[13] Even more important, "The church is not a religious community of worshippers of Christ,"[14] but the communion of those who are living in the world and sharing in its sufferings. The body of Christ today does not hide from the world any more than the man Jesus hid from the cross. "In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other."[15] The bond which unites the community of saints is purely existential; only in that do they have their being for others.

What, then, is the "reality of God"? Bonhoeffer certainly would not claim to give us a final answer. His discussion of religion tells us part of what God is not (a stopgap or a *deus ex machina*); and in *Act and Being* he made it equally clear that God is not a timeless, self-contained entity which exists by and for itself. God is transcendent, beyond our grasp; and yet he is "for us."[16] We meet him in responsible and self-giving encounter with our neighbor. God "reveals" to us through such encounter a new "existence for others." Bonhoeffer had intended to discuss this in a book which is outlined in *Letters and Papers from Prison.* Even here we can see him struggling with the question—

> Who is God? Not in the first place an abstract belief in God, in his omnipotence, etc. That is not a genuine experience of God, but a partial extension of the world. Encounter with Jesus Christ. The experience that a transformation of all human life is given in the fact that "Jesus is there only for others." His "being there for others" is the experience of transcendence. It is only this "being there for others," maintained till death, that is the ground of his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. . . . Our relation to God is not a "religious" relationship to the highest, most powerful, and best Being imaginable—that is not authentic transcendence—but our relation to God is new life in "existence for others," through participation in the being of Jesus. The transcendental is not infinite and unattainable tasks, but the neighbor who is within reach in any given situation. God in human form . . . the "man for others," and therefore the Crucified, the man who lives out of the transcendent.[17]

The place in which we may most fully be drawn into encounter with God is in the body of Christ, and thus we have "God as 'Christ existing as community.' "

With this definition of terms we should be able to examine Bonhoeffer's theology of the church in greater depth. The discussion is divided into three sections: "The Church and the Individual" "The Church and the Will of God" and "The Church and Revelation."

### *The Church and the Individual*

Bonhoeffer gave much thought to the problem of man and how man should seek to understand himself. First, Bonhoeffer made it clear that man can never understand himself if he uses his own "I" as the central point of reference. This, after all, as he pointed out in the first chapter of *Ethics* (in the language of the Genesis mythology) was the cause of man's fall. He sought to have knowledge of good and evil in terms of himself. The result is either complete insecurity or false security. If man looks out on the world with no other point of reference than himself and his own reason, he can only evaluate his reasoning by his own reasoning; and all sense of meaning and value is lost. Man stands in hopelessness and experiences what Kierkegaard called "Fear and Trembling." On the other hand, man may seek security in self-judgment. He usurps the place of God "by wishing to secure himself at least through self-understanding."

> He declares himself to be good, he declares himself to be evil—and both are only the attempt, whether good or evil, to be secure; but one thing he does not recognize, his guilt to God in his goodness and in his evilness, which consists precisely in the fact that he wishes to make himself final, secure, that he will not be broken afresh and healed by God alone, will not be judged and pardoned, that he will not be made right by grace. Man desires to make himself right, that is his guilt.[18]

The product of such self-judgment is cheap grace. Cheap grace is the religious grasping for security through escape from responsibility for the world and our own lives. "Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves."[19] It is justifying our selfish sins instead of striking boldly into the world in order to obey the will of God as best we can in the faith that God will justify our attempt and forgive our errors and weakness. This latter kind of grace "is costly because it costs a man his life" in being for others, "and it is grace because it gives man the only true life."[20] Rather than living fully in the uncertainty of the world, man becomes legalistic in his desire to judge himself:

> Now he is lord of the world, but only of the world which his I interprets and fabricates for itself, lord in his I-enclosed, distorted world. He sees his fellow man as a thing and sees God as he who satisfies his religious needs, and now he seeks to set himself eternally in this world; he does not wish to die, he wishes to make himself right and to live for ever. But in the search for this, which leads him beyond philosophy and beyond religion, man begins to feel his tremendous solitude. He is anxious at this lordship over a dead world, and in his anxiety he breaks the fearful silence of his solitude and snatches himself away from himself, confronts himself, in order to fill the place of the missing other, and accuses himself. That is conscience. But in that he remains accuser, defendant and judge all in one, the call of conscience reveals itself to be only the last grasping of the I after itself, after possibilities, and its call dies away in the silent, dominated world of the I.[21]

Bonhoeffer began to develop his solution in the terms of I and Thou. He turned to Eberhard Grisebach who "declares the concrete 'Thou' as the limit of man. Existence is in reality only in encounter with a Thou. Here is real limit, no longer an imagined one. . . ."[22] Bonhoffer acknowledged this as a step in the right direction but asserted that "Grisebach succeeds in it only by making the Thou absolute in place of the I and by giving it a place that can only be God's."[23]

What Bonhoeffer meant is that no one can force any other person into true manhood, into being for others. He may make a claim on the other person, but he cannot compel him to recognize it. "No man can of himself make the other into an I, into a moral person conscious of responsibility." "The other man is Thou only in so far as God makes him this."[24] Just as the other man cannot create me existentially, neither can I create myself. To do so would be to fall into the trap of self-reference already discussed. Only God can create me, but creation takes place in the relationship of I-Thou. "It is a Christian recognition that the person, as a conscious person, is created in the moment when a man is moved, when he is faced with responsibility, when he is passionately involved in a moral struggle, and confronted by a claim which overwhelms him. Concrete personal being arises from the concrete situation."[25] It is in this moment that

God exercises his freedom to give himself to man. "The man living in the fellowship of the I-Thou relation is given the certainty that he is loved, and through his faith in Christ receives the strength to be able to love in return . . ."[26] "but love, as the love or heart of Christ in man, is given to man as a new heart, as the will for good."[27]

As you may recognize, a jump has been made here from isolation to community. It could, perhaps, have been made more slowly, but to do so might jeopardize our understanding of Bonhoeffer's train of thought. He recognized no long transition from isolation to community. In the act of creating men, God "places them within the divine community."[28] "He, who in Christ is already in the church, is led into the church."[29] As a man receives a new existence for others, he becomes part of the body of Christ which is the communion of those who are for others. It is not only an ipso facto membership but a de facto drawing together in communion. "It is in Christ that God loves men and makes a gift of his heart, and because he makes a gift of himself to sinful man he renews him at the same time, and thus makes the new community possible and real. This means that God's love wants community."[30] As a man moves closer into communion with others in Christ, they enter into deeper I-Thou relationships through which God is able to give himself more fully. "The man whose life is lived in love is Christ in respect of his neighbour—but, of course, always only in this respect. 'We are God through the love that makes us do good to our neighbour.' (Luther) Such a man can and should act like Christ. He should bear his neighbour's burdens and sufferings."[31] In the end, then, man finds identity and reference in the body of Christ into which he is placed in his creation. "Therefore, man can no longer understand himself from himself, but only from Christ, who exists as community. . . ."[32]

The love of God, which creates man and places him in the church, is, however, a gift. It may be accepted or rejected. Now we have placed man back in the situation where he is confronted by the claims of his neighbor and he has been offered a new existence. He must choose to accept or reject membership in the body of Christ—the church. A dramatic example of this is found in the church struggle in Germany. The question was raised of who constituted the church. Bonhoeffer discussed the problem in a paper entitled "The Question of the Boundaries of the Church and Church Union."[33] The church, he noted, may see its boundaries as determined by baptism, but it knows also "at the same time an inner boundary which embraces only a part of those who are baptised."[34] This inner boundary is determined by confession, by those who respond to the cry of the gospel:

> There are no theoretical statements about the saved and the lost, there is no verdict 'This man belongs to the church, that man does not,' but simply the joyful cry of those who have been granted a share in a great, astonishing gift, 'Here is the Gospel!' 'Here are the pure sacraments!' 'Here is the church!' 'Come here!'[35]

This cry of the church is not merely theological, but as we have said, confessional. But Bonhoeffer "spoke of oral confession no longer merely theologically, but as an act to be carried out:"[36]

> The question of church membership should not be answered by theology alone, but by a decision of the church. The faithful rally not round theology but round the confession.
>
> The confession is the church's decision about its boundaries made on the basis of theology. It is not a representation of the whole of the church's teaching, but a decision of the church taken on the basis of the whole of its teaching to join battle at a specific place. In the confession, theology is actualized by the decision of the church.[37]

Bonhoeffer saw the Aryan clause and the Fuhrer principle as the issues which marked the specific place at which the Confessing Church must choose to join battle. The battle cry was sounded—". . . here, where Jew and German stand together under God's word, is the Church! Here is the gospel! Here is the only true communion in Christ!"[38] —in the confessions at Bethel, Barmen and Dahlem. The confession was actualized in the Pastor's Emergence League, in Finkenwalde, and in every action by which Hitler and the Reich Church were opposed. Confronted with the claims laid on a man by the Thou of the Jewish people, the decision had to be made either to be for others and accept salvation into a new existence as part of the body of Christ (but perhaps to face arrest and death), or to be safe and reject God's gift. No wonder Bonhoeffer thought it obvious that "Whoever knowingly cuts himself off from the Confessing Church in Germany cuts himself off from salvation."[39]

### *The Church and the Will of God*

Bonhoeffer's discussion of the Barmen and Dahlem Synods in this same paper also provides us with a concrete basis for understanding his doctrine of the church as the mediator of God's will. Bonhoeffer surprised his colleagues by asking quite bluntly, "What did God say about his church when he spoke through Barmen and Dahlem?"[40] They were shocked that he would use it as a test of faith just as he would the basic confessions of Lutheranism. What did Bonhoeffer mean by "the will of God," and how did he see it in relation to the church?

The doctrine is developed in *Sanctorum Communio* in terms of a synthesis between sociology and theology. He first observed that sociologically, "where wills unite, a 'structure,' that is, a third thing, previously unknown, arises, independent of its being willed or not willed by the persons joining with one another."[41] This structure is something more than the sum total of the individuals. It has its own existence in a sense, its own personality and qualities such that

> a third man joining them does not see just the two men joined together, but rather a third thing, the structure itself, opposes his will with a resistance which is not identical with the will of the two individuals, but can be greater than the resistance of the individuals, or—if such an idea were possible—of the sum of all individuals. It is this 'structure' which is objective spirit.[42]

The objective spirit of a community influences its members: "In community the individual is faced by his own objectivised self. His own life has flowed into the community, and stands before him daily as experienced content and form, as a regulative principle for his conduct."[43] From our own experiences in groups, especially groups which make decisions, such as a general church conference, we may recognize that the objective spirit Bonhoeffer spoke of can have considerable influence over the decisions made by the body. Members who are uncertain or uncommitted may often be led by the objective spirit of the body to make decisions they might not have made in isolation. "Objective spirit is the will effectively operating upon the members of the community. It has individual form. It leads an individual life over and above the individuals of the community, yet it is real only through them. The more the individuals are alive, the more powerful is the objective spirit."[44]

In the community of saints, the body of Christ, the objective spirit becomes the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit of the church is directed as personal will towards personal wills."[45] The Holy Spirit is also the power which binds the community together in the I-Thou relationship already discussed. It is through the Holy Spirit that man receives faith and grace, the assurance that in Christ he is received in love and receives forgiveness of sins. This is faith in the communion of the body of Christ. ". . . The Holy Spirit moves man in such a way that in putting Christ into his heart he [the Spirit] creates faith and love. The faith in Christ which the Spirit effects, however, involves faith in the Church in which he reigns."[46] We can understand the relationship between the church and the individual more fully now, in terms of faith, grace, and love as products of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

> The man living in the fellowship of the I-Thou relation is given the certainty that he is loved, and through his faith in Christ receives the strength to be able to love in return, in that he, who in Christ is already in the church, is led into the church. He no longer sees the other members of the church essentially as claim, but as a gift, as a revelation of his love, that is, of God's love, and of his heart, that is, of God's heart, so that the Thou is to the I no longer law but gospel, and hence an object of love.[47]

It is also in the Holy Spirit that man and church perceive the will of God. As the man joins the community in being for others, he may open himself to the direction of the Holy Spirit and obey it as God's will. This does not mean, of course, that decisions are made for man, or that they are made easy. Man must still bring all his abilities to bear in sorting out the will of God from the available possibilities,[48] but he no longer stands alone in trying to judge the world in reference to himself—as fallen man, as man "in Adam." Rather he is now "in Christ" and seeks the will of God revealed in Christ. Then he follows that will with faith in the merciful judgment of God. This is essentially the position of situation ethics; that we can never be absolutely certain of the correct decision.

Bonhoeffer struggled with such tensions. After his decision to return to Germany in 1939, he wrote in his diary:

> It is strange that I am never quite clear about the motives that underlie my decisions. Is that a sign of vagueness, or intellectual dishonesty, or a sign that we are led on beyond what we can discern, or is it both? . . . We can in fact, justify anything; but in the last resort we are acting from a plane that is hidden from us; and so we can only ask God to judge and forgive us. . . . At the end of the day I can only ask that God may judge this day, and all the decisions, mercifully. It is in his hands now.[49]

Nevertheless, he felt that the will of God could be seen in the decisions of the church, especially in corporate actions where it is led by the Spirit in confession. We are no longer surprised at Bonhoeffer calling the Barmen and Dahlem confessions expressions of the will of of God. The very nature of the Body of Christ compelled the Synods to confess as they did.

### *The Church and Revelation*

The problem of revelation involves the problem of God, so we had best stop here and define a few terms, at least in relation to each other. Bonhoeffer used the equivalent of the Trinity in so far as he spoke of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. With these he closely associated the Sacraments and the Word, which define the boundaries of Christ. The differences between these terms are extremely subtle, and it may legitimately be questioned whether he really needed to use them all. In fact, it seems that he frequently used them interchangeably. The differences are slight and difficult enough to determine that attempting to define them here would be unwise. We will just have to keep this relationship in mind. The relationship between revelation and God poses the same problem but allows at least a discernible difference. Propositional revelation is never even discussed except in passing references to the Bible or the Pope. We will do better to think of revelation as the revealment of God himself. The only content of revelation is God (or Christ). The limit of revelation which allows us to separate it from its content is that God can never be fully revealed. That is the very nature of transcendence.

The problem Bonhoeffer posed in *Act and Being* is whether revelation (and thus God) is to be understood in terms of the category of transcendental "act" or the ontological "being." He first discussed the transcendental endeavor, pointing out that if God is revealed only in pure act, as in historical or personal event (the "Christ event" for example) then God becomes purely nonobjective. Revelation becomes something fixed in the past to which we look back; and only by subjective reflection, in reference to ourselves, can we decipher it. Revelation, and thus God, exists only in reference to the self and we are caught again in the trap of self-reference. "Thereupon God 'is' only in so far as I think, i.e. enter myself in thought."[50] "Whoever countenances the idea that he need only arrive at himself to be in God is doomed to hideous disillusion in experiencing the utter introversion, the treadmill confinement to the self, of the very loneliest solitude, with its tormenting desolation and sterility."[51]

The ontological approach to revelation gives it complete objectivity and continuity, but total objectivity means that it is independent of man; it is an entity. God becomes an entity which is always at my disposal. The result is that God becomes incased and defined in some knowable limit such as doctrine, psychic experience, or institution; and eventually we are tempted to make God into the *deus ex machina.* God is no longer crucial to man's existential existence. God cannot be free to meet me in the moment of decision.

Bonhoeffer's solution to the problem of revelation as act or being was the church. "The Christian communion is God's final revelation: God as 'Christ existing as community'. . . ."[52] In the church the revelation of God takes on both the modes of act and being. It is act because the community only maintains and demonstrates its existence as Christ in its everyday living in the world. As was said earlier, "In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other. The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world. . . ."[53] Revelation in Christ is always active and dynamic, but it preserves also the continuity of ontology through the existence of the community. It is no longer totally defined in self-reference:

> The being of revelation does not lie in a unique occurrence of the past, in an entity which in principle is at my disposal and has no direct connection with my old or my new existence, neither can the being of revelation be conceived solely as the ever-free, pure and non-objective act which at certain times impinges on the existence of individuals. No, the being of revelation 'is' the being of the community, Christ, wherein the individual finds himself to be already in his new existence. This ensures three considerations: 1. the being of revelation can be envisaged in continuity; 2. the existence of man is critically involved; 3. it is impossible to regard the being of revelation as entity, as objective, or on the other hand as non-entity, as non-objective.[54]

This last is perhaps the greatest lesson the Christian world—and especially the Restoration world—has to learn. The Church of Jesus Christ is neither an eternal entity which can be given and taken away by an external force nor a static body of people who hold the "Truth" and perform the proper rituals with the properly given authority. The Church of Christ exists only where there are people willing to give themselves up to share in tin the suffering of Christ in the world through being for others. Only here is the reality of Christ revealed in the world.

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1. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 232. Used by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 241.
3. *Ibid.,* p. 318.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 302.
5. *Ibid.,* p. 559.
6. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison,* edited by Eberhard Bethge (New York: The Macmillan Company, revised edition, 1967), p. 139. Used by permission of the Macmillan Company. *Cf.* Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ*

*the Center* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), p. 29 ff.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
12. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1961), p. 121.
13. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), p. 60.
14. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, edited by Eberhard Bethge (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 83. Used by permission of the Macmillan Company.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
16. *Christ the Center*, Part I.
17. *Letters and Papers*, p. 202.
18. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Man in Contemporary Philosophy and Theology," in *No Rusty Swords*, edited by E. H. Robertson (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), pp. 50-69. This is Volume I of a collected works, 1928-36.
19. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 47.
20. *Ibid.*
21. "Man in Contemporary Philosophy," pp. 66-7.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 36. *Sanctorum Communio* was the original title of this, his doctoral thesis.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
32. "Man in Contemporary Philosophy," p. 68.
33. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Question of the Boundaries of the Church and Church Union," in *The Way to Freedom*, edited by E. H. Robertson (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), pp. 75-96. Collected works Volume II, 1935-39.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
36. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 154.
37. "Church Union," p. 83.
38. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 207.
39. "Church Union," p. 94. *Cf.* p. 118.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
41. *Communion of Saints*, p. 65.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
48. *Cf. Ethics*, pp. 38-40.
49. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 557-8.
50. *Act and Being*, p. 32.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
53. *Ethics*, p. 195.
54. *Act and Being*, p. 123.

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*Robert Mesle is a senior in the Special Studies curriculum at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.*

# EDITORIALS

## A Call for Open Communion

We hope that the First Presidency takes very seriously the request of the World Conference of 1970 for a "clarifying statement on the subject of closed communion." Developments in recent years—social and psychological as well as theological—have raised new and important questions about the church's tradition of closed communion.

Theologically the Reorganized Church has justified closed communion on the assumption that only RLDS ministers have authority to officiate at the Lord's Supper and that the Supper is a renewal of a specifically RLDS covenant in denominational terms and denying the authority of ministers of other Christian denominations, we have assumed that closed communion was the correct practice.

Yet in recent years there appears to be a growing body of opinion within the Reorganized Church that it is myopic for us to claim a corner on authority and that the baptismal commitment is, above all, a covenant with Christ rather than to a particular denomination. In light of the growing tendency to see ourselves as part of the larger "body of Christ," rather than "the one true church," the traditional basis for closed communion appears to be in serious question.

We view the increasing contact between members of the Reorganized Church and other Christian denominations as beneficial for the Reorganized Church and, hopefully, for the other churches also. Coming together to cooperate in ministries of social action and other areas of common endeavor often leads to discussions which bring greater understanding of each other's beliefs. Our misunderstandings of other faiths are reduced, and vice versa.

As we become aware of the significant areas of common Christian belief and action, it seems appropriate that we should also be able to worship together. How tragic that the table of the Lord should continue to be a barrier to Christians coming together in the most significant worship service! To deny Christians of other denominations the opportunity to share in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is in effect to tell them that we really do not regard them as Christian.

Surely the time has come for us to recognize our commonality with our fellow Christians and to invite all Christians to share together with us in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The bonds which unite Christians are far greater than the differences of opinion that divide us. There is no more appropriate way to express this basic unity than by ending our exclusion of Christians from the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection simply because they are affiliated with another denomination of the body of Christ.

Editorial Committee

## Closed Communion: Another View

In my opinion, the above editorial is correct in its interpretation of what communion means to most members of the RLDS Church. In spite of the prayers faithfully read over the bread and wine, the communion is not so much a recommitment to Christ but a recommitment to the institutional church. It is also a community act indicating the fellowship of a group of people who regard themselves as *the* church of Jesus Christ. Hence, the communion takes on twofold significance as a reaffirmation of loyalty to the institution and to the other members of the institution, both of which are very important in perpetuating the institution.

Concerning authority, the editorial lightly suggests that RLDS ministers have no corner on authority, which is a flat denial of one of the reasons the Restoration was divinely called forth. In addition, many men gain a positive identity from their priesthood position in the church which keeps them committed to the institution. To suggest that they have no more authority than ministers of other denominations might call into doubt that identity and shake their commitment to the institution.

The same applies to the baptismal commitment as a covenant with Christ rather than with a particular denomination. That kind of thinking can lead to the death of the Restoration. Take away the identities that make people *someone* (priesthood member or true believer in the true church), and people will begin asking, "Why should I be part of the Restoration? Why even have a Restoration?" Then too many of the present church membership might never get past the loss of their status symbols which make them *someone* to explore what the Restoration may really be about.

No, the church can't afford to change its closed communion policy. To do so might mean its death.

Carolyn Raiser

## Needed: A New Method of Succession

The death of Mormon President David O. McKay in January, 1970, and the publication by Bookcraft of *Succession in the Church*, by Reed Durham and Steven Heath (reviewed in this issue by Russell F. Ralston), remind us once again of the problem of succession in the Presidency.

Traditionally Mormons have been able to make a good case for their custom of having the senior apostle assume the Presidency of the church upon the death of the President. A book such as *The Fallacy*, by Alvin Dyer (Deseret Book Company, 1964), notes considerable support for the position of the Utah Church. On the other hand, members of the Reorganized Church have mustered arguments of lineage as well as the alleged designation of Joseph III to be the founder's successor.

Perhaps it is time that members of both churches critically examined the idea of succession from a basis other than mere recitation of sources from Latter Day Saint scripture and tradition.

The inadequacy of the Utah Church's system should be well illustrated in the death last year of a ninety-six-year-old president and his succession by a "younger man" of ninety-three. The hierarchy of the Utah Church is made up almost entirely of men who would normally be retired if they labored at any other line of work. This produces a church extremely reluctant to change.

On the other hand, the Reorganized Church has so far operated only in terms of direct male lineage in its succession to the Presidency. Yet in any area outside of the church such a practice would be regarded as intolerable by most people. The passing on of kingdoms to male heirs seems terribly archaic today. A great many members of the Reorganized Church, of varied theological persuasions, are dissatisfied with the idea of a lineal Presidency.

Rather than trying to defend our particular traditions of succession, would it not be better for members of the Utah and Reorganized Churches to recognize that neither method is satisfactory? After the death of Joseph Smith, Jr., the group which went west understandably elevated the leader of the Twelve to the Presidency. The Reorganized Church had a real good catch in Joseph III, and they quite understandably made him their first president. But both churches erred in establishing precedents based on the first succession. Rather than debating which approach is correct, it would be more useful to debate which method of succession is worse. While lineage seems an extremely poor way to provide the best possible leadership of an organization, the seniority system may tend to produce less dynamic leadership. Perhaps if the Utah Church introduced our practice of retiring the apostles, their seniority system would not work so badly. Both churches would do well to move toward a normal retirement pattern for their presidents as well.

Many possible alternative methods of succession might be adopted. But before such methods will be considered by either church, the awareness of the inadequacy of our present methods must be realized by the membership. It will be interesting to see what sorts of attempts are made in the future to alter the present methods of succession in the two churches.

William D. Russell

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# REVIEWS

Succession in the Church. *By Reed C. Durham, Jr. and Steven H. Heath. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971, 197 pp., $3.25.)*

This book has been written primarily for members of the Mormon Church. Throughout the years considerable uncertainty among Mormons has existed regarding the law of succession in the Presidency. The death of President David O. McKay on January 18, 1970, brought the issue into sharp focus. With reference to the situation following his death the larger issue reappeared:

> . . . Various opinions were being given in every quorum meeting and Sunday School Class. Guesses were made in the downtown offices; predictions were offered up on every street corner.
>
> . . . Some voices proclaimed that succession to the Presidency is automatic, that the senior apostle will definitely become the new President. More voices shouted, "No," that the process was not automatic and that God would reveal to the Twelve Apostles, in a meeting in the Temple, who the next President was to be. . . .
>
> History seemed to repeat itself in all this speculative spirit about successorship to the Presidency of the Church. . . . But during the years from Joseph Smith to the present, through the administration of each of these Presidents, the law-of-succession principles have evolved and developed. . . .
>
> . . . With the acquisition of historical knowledge about the law of succession, past and present, most questions concerning the future will be answered.

The book proceeds to put forth, chapter by chapter, historical facts and interpretations which reveal with some clarity the manner in which the "law-of-succession principles evolved and developed" through the years. Since the senior member of the quorum of apostles emerges as the true successor, it is interesting to note the long struggle which took place through the years in an effort to clearly establish the basis for determining who the senior apostle is.

For those of the RLDS Church who may wish to read this book, I point to some things that may be of special note in light of our own philosophy and belief:

1. There has apparently been a total disregard of the law of common consent as it relates to participation by the members of the church in important decisions.
2. Great stress has been placed upon the importance of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, giving them absolute equality with the Presidency and bestowing upon them individually and as a quorum the rights of presidency without further call or ordination. The revelation upon which this interpretation rests also gives the Quorums of Seventy the same equality with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. However, this has never been recognized by the leadership of the Mormon church.
3. The long struggle with questions related to the means of determining who is the senior apostle evidences interesting implications regarding the "doctrine of man" as understood and taught by the Mormon church.
4. The Lord can change this procedure. He can "alter or modify or waive any of these principles should he so desire."

An interesting book, *Succession in the Church*, gives some light on the process of logic as it has developed in the Mormon church.

Russell F. Ralston

*Russell F. Ralston is a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles of the RLDS Church.*

**History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Volume 6, 1903-1915.** *By F. H. Edwards. (Independence: Herald House, 1970, 710 pp., $10.95.)*

Volume 6 of the Reorganized Church's "official" history follows the same basic format of earlier volumes. This is disappointing because of the severe limitations it places on the writing of an acceptable church history. The first fourteen chapters are devoted to covering the events from 1903 to 1913 with a separate chapter for each year. Chapters 15 and 16 are more in the form of essays dealing with events in the 1914 and 1915 period as the church shifted from the leadership of Joseph Smith III to that of F. M. Smith. Each of the chapters from 2 through 13 begins with a general discussion of world and United States events for that year. Each chapter also includes a variety of documentary, statistical, and official information interspersed with terse judgments by the author on various subjects. The format and choice of materials included are peculiar all too often.

For example, Brother Edwards notes that the church was usually not conscious of the world events surrounding it and shaping its future. Using these events as a preface to each chapter seems peculiar since they are hardly ever related to the material which forms the bulk of the chapter. It is perhaps convenient to have such a summary to remind the reader of how ego-centered the church was, but one wishes for more analysis of the long-range effects of world events than is provided in the first chapter and in scattered commentary. To do this would have meant breaking with the pedestrian year-by-year format, would have demanded that much detailed "fact" (e.g., the location of all the reunions held for a certain year) be omitted, and would have forced the book out of the rigid time span of 1903-1915. If something like this had been done, we might have gained some useful insights which are not possible in the present approach.

Many people in the church, including scholars, will find the volume useful because of the detailed information it contains. Much of it has been culled from official reports that are available in the *Saints' Herald* and other open sources. Assuming no more than the usual number of unavoidable factual errors, Volume 6 will be a convenient reference book.

Yet it is deadly dull for the casual reader (or the non-casual, for that matter) who is not interested in long lists of appointments to mission fields or even in reading the full text of a document which should have been summarized or edited because it is readily available in its entirety elsewhere.

Nevertheless, in some instances, the publication of the full text is more than justified. For example, the important statement of the Presidency to the quorums in 1907, "The Right of the Presidency to Preside," has not previously been available to most members but is essential in understanding the development of the 1925 "Supreme Directional Control" issue (pp. 248-250).

However, such practices as the inclusion of identical statistical information in the text and appendices and the inclusion of so much extraneous information are more than minor faults when one considers what else might have been done. To illustrate: three full pages (pp. 194-197) are used to report the church's interest in Zion and the gathering. Most of this space is used in listing seventeen questions commonly asked by members as compiled by Joseph Smith III. Areas of concern included whether interest should be charged by Saints now and in Zion; whether the profit motive, wages, banks, and stock companies are part of Zionic endeavors; and what sense there would be in transferring from one group of Saints to another values earned in Zion, since only Saints would be living there. As the author mentions, "The questions are of interest in showing the specific concern . . ." (p. 195). But he gives no indication of the nature of the answers to these concerns written in three subsequent editorials other than, "The answers were tentative rather than mandatory but were in line with the best thinking of the leading officers of the church at the time" (p. 197).

Such a casual dismissal of so important a topic is incredible. At least one chapter should have been spent on the evolving concepts surrounding Zion. The impression repeatedly emerges that the author had certain information to include on certain topics; and once the space was used up, that was it. No other topic, regardless of its significance, could be allowed to replace the interminable lists of official appointments. Exceptions are to be found in Chapter 15, "Choosing a Successor," and Appendix A, "The United Order of Enoch." These have cohesion and quality of interpretation absent elsewhere. If this topical, essay approach had been followed throughout, fewer subjects might have been covered but we might have had part of the *history* of the church.

And that is just what we do not have now in this volume. Brother Edwards has prodigiously compiled and arranged his material. He has even attempted to make interpretations and has commented from time to time on important subjects. But it does not hold together; it does not make historical sense. Even when his concerns are apparent and he has something valuable to say to us, as he does, for example, on the relationship of the roles of the Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve during these years, we are forced to compose our own narrative of what happened by looking at each year, each chapter, and finding the appropriate paragraphs. It is too much for the reader to do, and it ought not be necessary for him to do it. The task of the historian is to narrate and interpret, not conceal and confuse. We can thank the author for his thoughts, often quite perceptive, but much more is required than has been done.

Brother Edwards should not be allowed to take all the blame for the format which condemns this work to an unfortunate mediocrity. We as church members have wanted to see our forefathers' names in print, even if it is only a line, rather than read a cogent history. We who are more knowledgeable about what might be done to create such a history have not lived up to our stewardship. When advice has been given, as it was by the Historical Committee a few years ago, not to continue perpetrating our past mistakes in these matters, the advice has been ignored by the officials responsible. I am certain that Volume 6 will sell and make money for Herald House. Thankfully, I believe it will do some good in getting people to think about the church's past in ways they may not have thought before because Brother Edwards often shows courage and insight. But I am also absolutely certain that we have lost a unique opportunity. We have forever lost the possibility that Brother Edwards might have exercised his talents freely and given us a view of our past that no other can duplicate. This is not to say he might have told us all we need to know or that his would have been the final interpretation of these years. But we need his full contribution as one among others. With Volume 6 we have only a portion of that contribution.

I would ask for two things: (1) that Brother Edwards write once more, this time without being strangled by the old form, on the period he knows best—that from 1915 on; and (2) that the church never print another "official" history until it learns what history is about. When it learns that, it will not be tempted to write such a history anyway, and we shall all be the better for it.

A. R. Blair

*A. R. Blair is an associate professor of history at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.*

**Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World.** *By Hugh Nibley. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967, 451 pp., $4.95.)*

It is evident from the work demonstrated in *Since Cumorah* that Hugh Nibley not only did a great deal of research but that he is probably a very competent scholar in the field of ancient documents and their languages. It is equally evident that this knowledge has not made him at all objective or critical in the sphere of his own religion. Typical of such works, *Since Cumorah* displays both confident scholarship and the tritest of religious defenses.

The preface is perhaps the best part of the book, for here the scholar is most active. His objective is to impress us with the truth of the *Book of Mormon* on the basis of ancient documents found since Cumorah. He shows clearly the potential to be a good religious thinker while dealing with the problem of proof:

> When, indeed, is a thing proven? Only when an individual has accumulated in his own consciousness enough observations, impressions, reasonings and feelings to satisfy him personally that it is so. . . . The impressions that build up to definite proof are themselves non-transferrable (p. viii).

But the potential is never developed. Whereas in the preface he acknowledges that science is of necessity a process of developing, refining, and discarding theories, in the text itself he frequently falls back on the two standard (and contradictory) attacks conservative religion always makes on scientists: they think they know all the answers, and they themselves admit their complete ignorance. He exhibits a similar distrust of doctors of scriptural and secular law familiar to readers of the *Book of Mormon.*

The great mass of data he draws together would be impressive if he did not try so hard to impress us with it. His technique is like that often used in student term papers. When the student senses a weakness in his argument, he puts quotation marks around a few words in every sentence and footnotes them to demonstrate the weight of authority his argument carries. The result is a long list of footnotes to phrases which contribute little to the question at hand.

The value of his data is further suspect because of the way he develops many of his arguments. A prime example worth examining in depth is his section on "The Isaiah Question." He begins by attempting to disparage Isaiah scholars by emphasizing their most farfetched speculations. He then uses Otto Eissfeldt, the eminent Old Testament scholar, as authority for saying that no part of Isaiah can be definitely dated and thus that its disunity is mere speculation. Actually, he tells us, Eissfeldt sees the resemblance between chapters 1-39 and 40-55 as being just as close as that between 56-66 and 40-55. The dissimilarities may be easily accounted for. The implication obviously is that Eissfeldt sees Isaiah as a basic unity.

Nibley offers his own theory that Isaiah is, indeed, a basic unity which has merely been elaborated by his disciples but with no major divisions:

> It is further significant that the only passages from Isaiah quoted in the *Book of Mormon* are chapters 2-14 and 48-54. This corresponds surprisingly to the major divisions of Isaiah on which the scholars have most widely agreed, i.e., chapters 1-13 as the original Isaiah collection and 49-55 as the authentic Deutero-Isaiah [no footnote]. Only these two sections are quoted in the *Book of Mormon.* Why does Nephi, the passionate devotee, as he proclaims himself, of the writings of Isaiah, quote only from these two blocks of those writings? Can it be that they represent what pretty well *was* the writing of Isaiah in Lehi's time? (pp. 142-143).

If we are willing to stretch a point far enough, his logic is at least allowable, but not his use of Eissfeldt, as is clear in the following comparisons.

Nibley says:

> Thus, Eissfeldt can now tell us that references to Cyrus or Babylon do not necessarily date the chapters or even the verses in which they appear, the passages being so typically "Isaian" that the names may well be later substitutions (p. 140).

Eissfeldt says:

> . . . that xl-lxvi . . . could not derive from the prophet Isaiah who was active in the eighth century, but must be attributed to a prophet who appeared in the sixth century.
>
> The grounds for this dating of xl-lxvi, or more precisely, actually only of xl-lv are indeed decisive: the mention of Cyrus . . .; Babylon (not Assyria) threatened with downfall . . .; the peculiarities of linguistic usage and of thought (Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction.* 1965, p. 304).

Nibley:

> As Eissfeldt sums it up, in spite of all differences there are "very strong stylistic and historical resemblances between 40-55 and 56-66," and yet "the relationship between chapters 1-39 and 40-55 is just as close . . . and the resemblances include even peculiarities" (pp. 143-4).

Eissfeldt:

> We have already seen (p. 304) that the chapters Isa. xl-lxvi cannot derive from the Isaiah who was active in the second half of the eighth century, but must be two centuries later (p. 332).
>
> It is thus completely clear that Isa. lvi-lxvi does not derive from the Isaiah of the eighth century whose preaching is contained in i-xxxix of his book, any more than does xl-lv (p. 345).

The misleading effect of the entire section is evidenced in the conclusions drawn from it by Chris Hartshorn, as is discussed by Bruce Lindgren in his letter in *Courage*, June 1971, pp. 264-5.

Nibley's religious scholarship is also questionable in his approach to scripture. He asserts, for example, that ". . . we are now told that canonization may have relegated to the Apocrypha a good deal of genuine scripture" (p. 37). The assertion is impossible since writings only properly become scripture when a community has accepted them as sacred through some process of canonization. It is as though scripture falls out of heaven (a common error).

Similarly, he apparently has no understanding of how the Gospels developed:

> The very "multiplicity of the Gospels," is adequate evidence that someone has been manipulating the records.
>
> Today the experts think they have a pretty good idea of the sort of people responsible. They were people who had received the gospel from the apostles, but immediately after the passing of the apostles proceeded to make basic alterations, deliberately disregarding some of the most important teachings (pp. 29-30).

This completely misconstrues the entire modern approach to the synoptic problem by its apparent assumption that the development, passing on, and recording of oral tradition is equivalent to intentional distortion. Similar problems appear in his attempt to justify the Mormon bent toward secrecy by depicting primitive Christianity as gnostic and secretive.

The only section of the book which could really be said to have value is Chapter 12, which has no footnotes. Here Nibley tries to convey what he sees to be the message of the *Book of Mormon* to mankind. He is occasionally trite and naïve; but there is no doubt that he feels deeply what he is trying to say and out of this comes an occasional insight worth noting, such as the following one on love:

> . . . for charity there is no bookkeeping . . . no deals, interests, bargaining, or ulterior motives; charity gives to those who do not deserve and expects nothing in return; it is the love God has for us, and the love we have for little children, of whom we expect nothing but for whom we would give everything (p. 383).

Who can argue with that?

Robert Mesle

*Robert Mesle is a senior in the Special Studies curriculum at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.*

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# LETTERS

## Njeim's Insights

To the Editors:

Having read the review of George Njeim's *Insights Into the Book of Revelation as Illuminated by the Book of Mormon,* written by Lorne F. White (September 1970 *Courage*), I desire herein to express a different view of Njeim's *Insights.*

Njeim is not of those who insist that the Book of Revelation must be accepted on faith as any scholar will realize in reading the introduction.

They who question his reasoning are themselves lacking in scholarship or haven't given the book an unbiased study.

I thank God for the additional light he brings to Revelation and I, with him, look forward to our children for additional insights. He has lifted the veil from the most important symbols.

The author needs no sponsor save the testimony of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit accompanies one's study of the book, that person will know that the author was inspired to bring this addition to the "marvelous work and a wonder." His early culture and his consecrated scholarship in his many years of ministry for God and the church have qualified him for the task. The book will stand the test of time!

The same promise made by Moroni, the key-bearing angel of the Restoration, to the readers of the *Book of Mormon* could well apply to the readers of *Insights:* "If ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent; having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost and by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (*Book of Mormon,* p. 775).

Throughout the book the author states the opinions of other scholars before giving his own conclusions. He refers to the opinions of the prophets over one hundred times; many of these prophets used the same symbols as Christ in the book of Revelation.

It is indeed strange that White should criticize Njeim for lack of consideration of the opinions of other scholars when I find no quotation throughout his review in proof of his personal opinions. Is a scholar entitled to greater consideration than a prophet? Consistency is a jewel!

White's scholars insist that Revelation remains a "closed" book. Njeim's scholars have opened parts of it and by their help Njeim has opened the rest. According to John and Christ we are not to seal them up again (Rev. 22:10).

Critics may question the traditional interpretation developed by some of the ministers of the early days of the Restoration. No doubt they made some mistakes, but modern scholars are using many of their interpretations. Herbert Armstrong of Ambassador College agrees with many R.L.D.S. ministers in "The United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy."

There is no doubt that the historical concept of the book of Revelation is the only reasonable interpretation as Christ himself tells John, "Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. 1:19).

John begins with the condition of the church about A.D. 97 and finishes the book with the last resurrection and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, somewhat of history of over three thousand years made plain to the understanding of the righteous scholars.

Some scholars may agree that an apocalyptic work is valid and meaningful only as it illuminates the age in which it is written but I wonder, though laying no claim to scholarship, why Daniel was instructed, "The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. 12:9).

My study of Scripture has led me to believe, though I am no scholar, that prophecy generally was written and preserved for our time. Over 75 percent of all prophecy speaks of our age. Daniel says that none of the wicked shall understand these things; but the righteous shall understand

(Dan. 12:10).

I have no doubt as to John, the apostle of Christ, being the man who wrote these things but Christ was the real author of the book of Revelation.

The book had difficulty getting into the canon because the scholars passing on its authenticity could not understand its historical message or they would have written an interpretation for future generations. It was clearly miraculously preserved for our day.

There is no question as to the help the author of *Insights* received from the *Book of Mormon.* He who questioned this has failed to really study the book. He must have entirely missed the introduction and the epilogue.

Many scholars agree with Njeim in his "preoccupation" with such units as 42 months, 1260 days, 1000 years, 144,000, A.D. 566, A.D. 570, A.D. 1826, A.D. 1830. He quotes from some of these scholars.

Njeim could not expect too much from scholars who do not have the key to unfold the mystery of the book of Revelation. He gives them credit for much work well done. Too many Latter Day Saints are now ignoring the key. Scholarship is not the key. It could help in the use of the key.

Njeim does not claim perfection in his work. He says "If the principle of interpretation laid down in this work is found to be sound it is hoped that future students of Revelation may temper this emphasis as they lay a more satisfactory superstructure on the foundation" (Introduction, p. 16).

In conclusion let me say that true religion does not disregard the cultivation of our talents. True religion should expand our thinking powers. A true Christian who enjoys the gift of the Spirit, because of his experiences, may be able to "prove all things" to his own satisfaction but may fail to prove anything to those who have no life.

Orrin R. Wilcox
Mansfield, Missouri

## Cultural Differences

Re: "Cultural Differences and the Gospel of Jesus Christ," by Dayle M. Bethel (June 1971 issue) was most challenging and well written.

Lois H. Misselt
Marseilles, Illinois

To the Editors:

I wish to make reference to Dayle M. Bethel's article in the June 1971 issue of *Courage* entitled "Cultural Differences and the Gospel of Jesus Christ." The major part of his article describes the disturbances which exist in the American society. I think such information is important in helping an undergraduate college student recently out of high school to clarify his thinking about society. The radio and television bombard our nation hourly with disturbing information; the daily newspapers are filled with disturbing news; and the weekly magazines summarize it. Probably all the people except the feebleminded and the hermits know what is happening in our society.

I agree with Bethel that the R.L.D.S. Church has concentrated on the conversion of single individuals and families and that it cannot expect to become influential in America at the national, state, and local levels by limiting itself to this activity. I have noted with considerable interest the movement of the church into the broad field of social services in the larger centers of our church population, but it will probably take a very long time before it acquires the reputation which the Quakers, Salvation Army, and the Seventh Day Adventists long ago acquired in that particular field.

I have been concerned during the past decade about the small degree of influence the R.L.D.S. Church exerts in the United States at all levels, and Bethel's article didn't really help. It is one thing to concentrate on weaknesses and failures and quite another thing to concentrate on methods and techniques by which the church can become noted for unique spiritual, social, and economic contributions to the American nation. In the concluding four paragraphs of his article, Bethel addressed himself to the problem before the church in a dramatic climax much as a minister or other featured speaker would be expected to do; but he failed to offer specific steps or procedures which would help our local and full-time ministers to effectively present our church to the people of the United States and to other cultures.

The writers for *Courage* have tended to look at the R.L.D.S. Church much as a biologist looks at the object of his special interest. He studies the object minutely, uses the microscope extensively, and wants to become an authority regarding it. This is only a part of the process so far as the movement of the church is concerned.

I hope our educators and spiritual leaders will begin to write articles for *Courage* which effectively present means by which the R.L.D.S. Church can become widely known for its unique contributions. To me, at least, Bethel's article had little to offer in that area. Neither have the larger part of the previously published articles. I am not critical of *Courage*, because the editors can publish only those articles which are submitted to them. We need concentrated research in the particular area of church function so that articles on effective know-how can be published. Anything less than that is not enough.

Robert W. Gunlock
Des Moines, Iowa

* * *

## Book of Mormon

To the Editors:

RLDS Church members reading *Courage* articles on the church books will say: "You are trying to rob us of our Scriptures." This should not be the purpose of *Courage* magazine; rather its purpose should be the genuine desire to clear the pathway of debris so that RLDS, Mormons, and others may return to the spiritual study of the book of books, the Holy Bible, which still stands unchallenged as God's only written revelation to mankind, incarnated in Jesus Christ, "The Word made flesh," the complete and final revelation of God's truth, for time and eternity: "If they speak not according to the Law [Old Testament] and the Testimony [New Testament] ye shall know there is no light in them."

God alone, as revealed in Jesus Christ, has the answer to sin and guilt; and the Bible alone, although parodied by other sacred writings, tells of the means by which man can enter into fellowship with God and know Christ's peace of sin forgiven and sickness healed. Certain comparisons between the Bible and *Book of Mormon* are pertinent to discussion.

1. Has the *Book of Mormon* ever demonstrated any power to redeem men and women from lives of frustration, profligacy, and crime and re-create them into useful and praiseworthy Christians and valuable citizens? No rescue missions have been established and operated on the skid rows of the world in which the *Book of Mormon*, in the hands of missionaries, has been used to direct erring ones to Christ the Savior with the result of lives transformed by the power of the gospel.

2. No great truths have been expressed by the *Book of Mormon* that have not been expressed better by the Bible, or for that matter, by the non-Christian philosophers. The book contains no unique system of ethics or any unique philosophy of religion.

3. The *Book of Mormon* has added nothing to the world's store of history or literature. It has inspired little great art or song, other than a few good hymns and the annual Palmyra Pageant which would fall of its own weight if it were not supported with dramatic lighting effects and lavish theatrical tricks to sustain the viewers' interest. In literary value it is unquotable; and as Mark Twain said, "is chloroform in print," as can be seen by the number of Saints in church who are put to sleep by its unending repetitions. It is far surpassed as literature by the Koran of

Mohammed, the Analects of Confucius, or the Vedas of the Hindus, or for that matter, by *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* from that other great American prophetess, Mary Baker Eddy.

The English Bible has contributed more than any other volume to the purity and vitality of the English language and has inspired artists, poets, musicians, and men of letters for nearly five hundred years. Its glory as a piece of literature has not diminished, and a thousand years of archaeology have not disproved any of its historical references but have confirmed its historical certainties. Even the most liberal critics of the Bible (University of Chicago, for example), while pointing out its many minor mistakes in numbers, etc., have to admit that there is no change in the major truths or teachings of the Bible through the ages, using the word *miraculous* to describe the fact that there aren't more mistakes.

One could wish that Joseph Smith, who had such spiritual potential, could have spent his years from fifteen to twenty-five studying his Bible. Without creeds (which he abhorred) or instruction by ministers of the gospel (whom he distrusted), the Scriptures would have been able to make him wise unto salvation. Instead of reading the Bible, he ignored it almost entirely according to the testimony of his own mother, avoiding, by his own admission, the means of grace that were available to him and, according to his neighbors, cultivating the pursuits of idleness.

If this were not a free country, relatively speaking, parts of the *Book of Mormon* would be banned as obscene, such as the passage about faith beginning to burn and grow, etc. Even the promise held out to the unwary as the final test, "to study it out in your mind and then your heart will burn within you as a proof that these things are true . . .," is a false epistemology inaccurately borrowed from the Bible, in which the disciples said their "hearts did burn within them as Christ walked with them on the way to Emmaus" and "opened to them the Scriptures," not as they tried to figure out in their minds if the *Book of Mormon* were true.

It is strange that a person could be in the church all his life and have six years of religion in college without hearing of Ethan Smith, a quasi-minister in Smith's family who wrote a book like a historical novel on the Indians of South America with many parallels to *Book of Mormon* material. Latter Day Saints have never disparaged the reputation of Dr. Anthon; and while they have anathematized E. D. Howe, none has ever cast reflection upon this writer, one whose documentation is careful and complete. He wrote while Smith was still living so Latter Day Saints can't say as they often do that the anti-Mormon material was written long after the events occurred and therefore cannot be trusted. Israel A. Smith and hundreds of students have been aware of Howe's books and studied them carefully. Their reason for ignoring the Anthon letter to Howe is perfectly obvious. They would neither dare to doubt its existence or deny its accuracy. But as the Bible says, they "willingly are ignorant" and will not endure sound doctrine or truth but sway their ears to fables and thus fall under the strong impulse to believe a lie when the truth is staring them straight in the face, the truth that Jesus Christ said would set us free.

John Luff Williams
Ottumwa, Iowa

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## Experience and Faith

To the Editors:

Mr. Elliott asks, "How does a true believer ignore the disconfirmation of church history?" (March issue).

Some clarification is necessary for me. First I must ask the true believer in what? For while some incident of the past may serve to disconfirm the whole faith for one, it may simply serve to clarify and refine the belief of another. There are many variations of belief and many individual theologies within the Restoration

Movement. I suppose, however, that the simple fact that one may continue to work in and support the church and teach a version of its theology is incomprehensible enough to those who interpret their answers to the many historical questions as a disconfirmation of the faith.

While I am frequently troubled with the arguments presented by those who have in good integrity examined the history of the church and found it insufficient to support the faith, I find that I am held to the church by something other than its history. For the RLDS Church is founded not only on its history and on a growing and more precise theology but it is a religion of personal experience as well.

Half my life I lived without any personal experience with the ministry of the Holy Spirit until that moment when the Lord touched my life and I knew without doubt the Holy Spirit was a force from outside my body bringing insight, peace and love into my life. This experience came to me in church. It was also in church that the Lord poured out his Spirit in one special moment and gave me the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of ancient prophecy. He transformed in that moment what had been a belief into a sure knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This is a knowledge that cannot be passed on by me to anyone else, but must be received in that same way.

Many of the experiences that we cite as bearing evidence of the work of divinity in the church do not prove our denomination above those of others where similar experiences take place. Of my experiences, the ones which to me seem most relevant to Mr. Elliott's question are the experiences which led to my accepting appointment in the church.[1] The actual experiences are not important to anyone but me, but they have forced me to conclude that the Lord does recognize the RLDS Church as an instrument in his mission to mankind and is blessing its efforts to carry out the elements in his plan for the world that have been assigned to it.

We have the responsibility to examine critically the credibility and meaning of our own personal experience. We alone have the responsibility for making and living by the conclusions we reach. While the true believer often falsely concludes that everything he believes is true because of one spiritual experience, the skeptic is just as likely to conclude the entire faith is without foundation if one skeleton is found in the closet.

While I remain concerned and bothered by modern day as well as historical happenings in the church I attempt to remain dedicated to the Lord's service through the instrumentality of the Restored Church because my faith is based on more than history, more than scripture, more than the beliefs and faith of others. It is based upon my own continuing experience.

W. H. Collins
Detroit, Michigan

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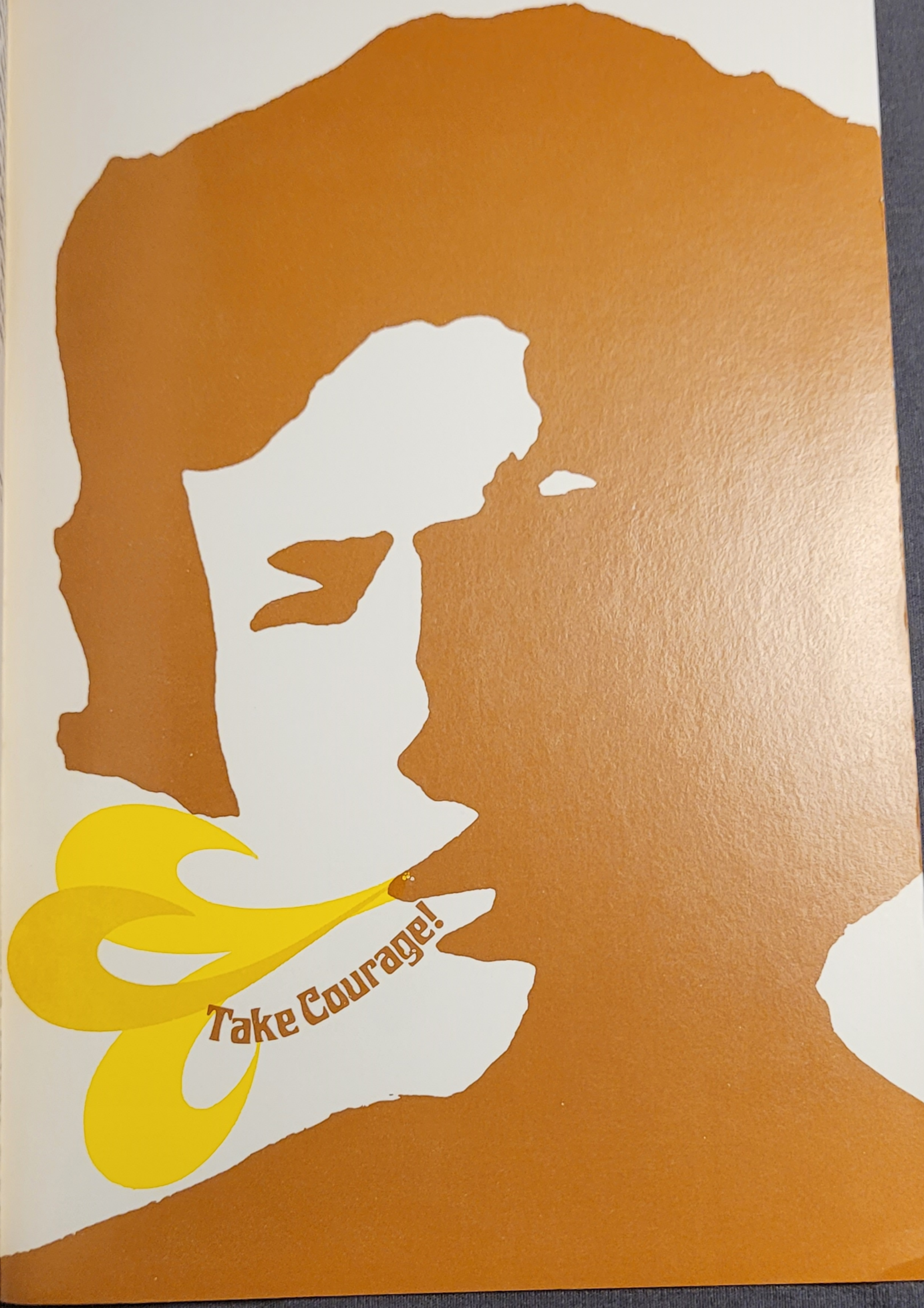
1. "A Religion of Experience," *Saints' Herald,* February 1964, p. 10.

*The editorial committee welcomes letters responding to the contents of this and subsequent issues of Courage.*


Take Courage!

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